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Racism on the National Health

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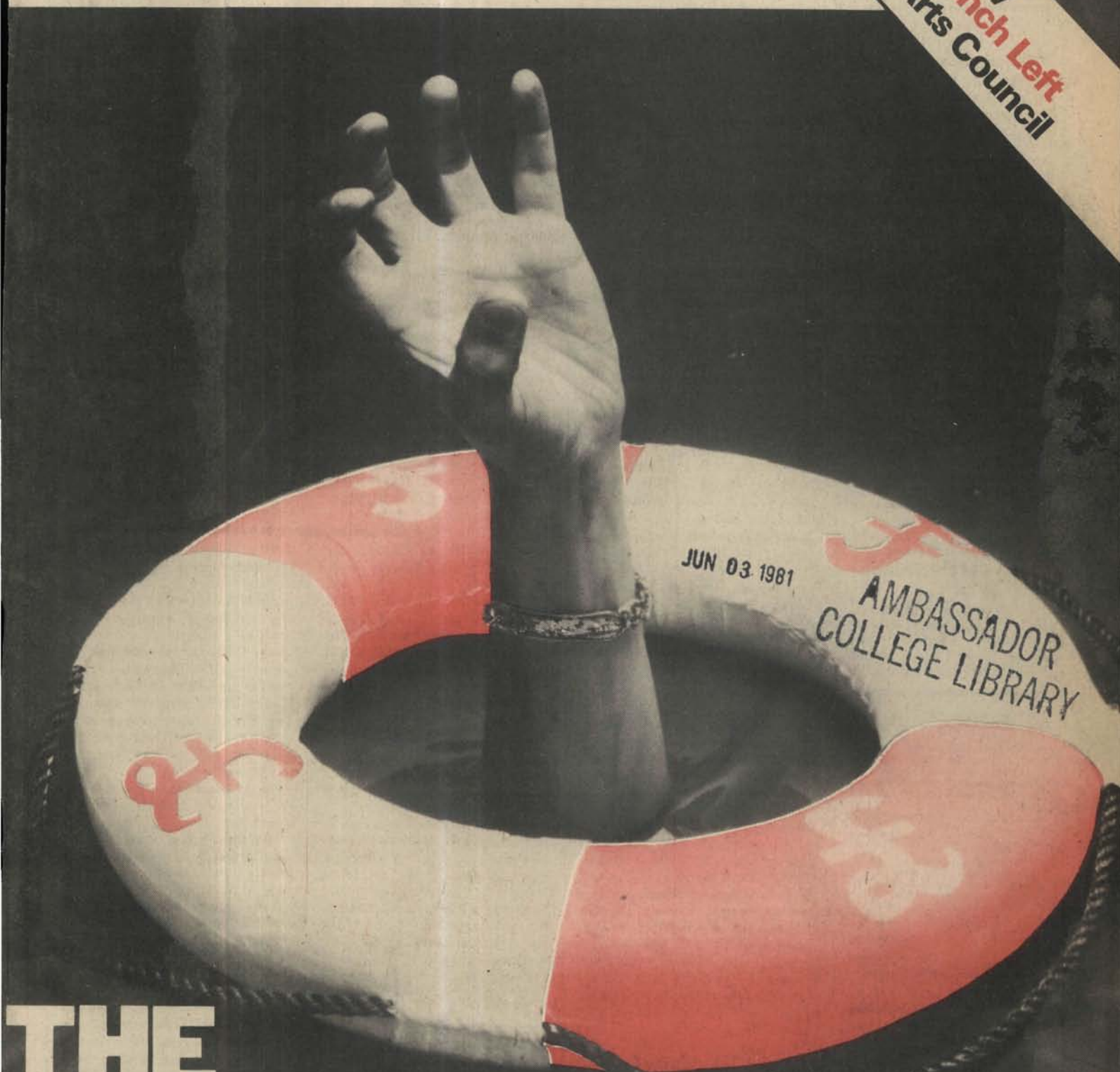
History of the French Left

Writers and the Arts Council



THE SINKING OF THE ROYAL NAVY

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Messing about in boats
Philip Geddes dissects the escalating cost and diminishing efficiency of the Royal Navy Page 6

How to go spook-spotting
Part four of Who's really who Page 8

Missile diplomacy
Helena Cobban reports on how President Assad is winning new friends and influencing people Page 10

Racism in the NHS
Amrit Wilson reveals a sinister new development in the welfare state Page 13

Writers and the Arts Council
Jim McGuigan looks at the Arts Council's half-hearted love affair with literature Page 17

History of the French Left
In the light of Mitterrand's election success, Robin Blackburn examines the forces which have shaped the Left in France Page 19

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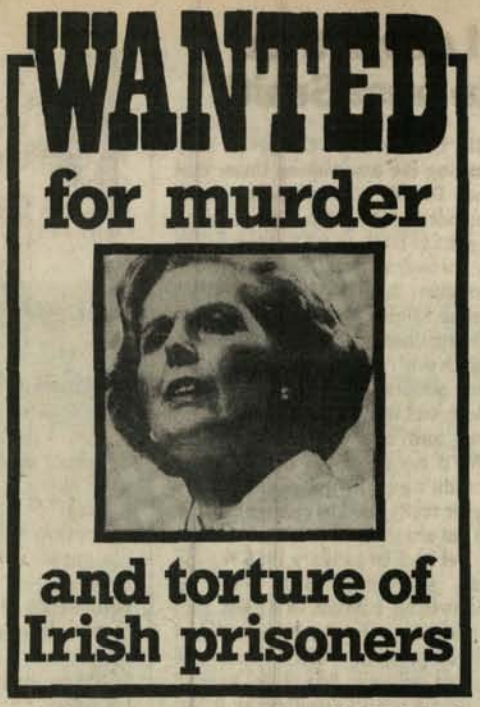
Mary Holland reports from Dublin on the hunger strike's effect on the ballot box

No end to new 'Bloody Sunday'

MRS THATCHER'S determination not to compromise with the H Block hunger strikers has now cast a long shadow over elections in Ireland, North and South. As the huge funeral processions wend their way through the towns and villages of Northern Ireland, the effects are being felt at the ballot box. In the North, the Rev. Ian Paisley's triumphant performance in last week's local government elections has confirmed the deepening rift between the two communities, already shown when the voters of Fermanagh and South Tyrone elected Bobby Sands as their MP. In the Irish Republic Mr Charles Haughey is now deep into an election campaign in which the North, and particularly the Dublin government's powerlessness to affect the H Block crisis, seems likely to become a major issue.



H-Block poster: now the view of most Irish Catholics?

The polarisation of the two communities in Northern Ireland is now worse than at any time since Bloody Sunday in 1972, and much of this is due to the Government's handling of the hunger strike. In Derry last week for the funeral of the fourth hunger striker, Patsy O'Hara, I visited homes in the Catholic Bogside and Creggan whose occupants in the past had at the least been ambivalent about the IRA, and quite often critical of the campaign of violence.

They are still critical, but in a different way. Now the question most commonly asked is: 'Why aren't the Provos doing more to avenge the hunger strikers?' It is often forgotten in Britain that the IRA does not exist in a vacuum. It has to respond to the pressures from its own community if it is to maintain any credibility. With each funeral those pressures are growing. On the Protestant side this is mirrored by a bitter anger that the hunger strikers, whom Protestants perceive as the scourge of their community, are being treated as heroes within Ireland and abroad. Unlike the effect of a single act of violence, however horrific, there is no end in sight this time. Instead, there is the obsessional preoccupation with each news bulletin, each death, each funeral — and the repercussions from them. In the three weeks since Bobby Sands died, 18 people have died violently in Northern Ireland — ten civilians and eight members of the security forces — and still there persists a general sense of relief that things have not been much worse.

There has been speculation that it was part of Mrs Thatcher's rationale for her present policy on the H Block protest, that she might placate Protestant anger over security and suspicions about the new Anglo-Irish talks by letting the hunger strikers die. If so, her failure to achieve this was shown in the way the Protestant community voted in last week's local government elections. The dramatic gains made by the Rev. Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party have been widely attributed to its leader's vigorous campaign against the talks between Dublin and London. It is true that after the Haughey-Thatcher meeting in Dublin last December, Dr Paisley did seize the political initiative from the Official Unionist Party with his campaign of rallies on the 'Carson trail' across the province. But it is also true that these rallies never attracted quite the crowds nor gathered the momentum which the Westminster government had feared. The Protestant community was still somewhat divided about Dr Paisley, many of them agreeing with his views but fearful of his tactics. The middle class disapproved of the challenge he presented to the Official Unionist Party and even the Loyalist paramilitary organisations were critical of his rhetoric, which they felt would put them in the firing line if the sectarian conflict which he seemed to be inviting ever came about. What finally coalesced the Protestant community behind Dr Paisley was the emotion aroused by the hunger strike and the very real fear that the whole Catholic community had now swung in behind the Provisional IRA.

On the Catholic side, the Social Democratic and Labour Party managed, against long odds, to hold its own — mainly because its leader, John Hume, was seen to be making efforts to find a resolution to the hunger strike. But the centre ground collapsed almost completely. Gerry Fitt, who lost his seat on Belfast City Council after 23 years, was only the most prominent of the candidates who were defeated because they were known to oppose the hunger strike. Although the Provisionals did not put up candidates, anyone who did stand in support of the prisoners in Catholic areas did well — often remarkably so, given their rather disorganised campaign.

IN THE IRISH REPUBLIC Mr Haughey's decision to call a general election — postponed several times while the Irish Premier sought a back-door solution to the hunger strike — is now deeply shadowed by the Northern crisis. It has long been received wisdom in Dublin that the North is not important in any election here, that the electorate's main concern is with bread-and-butter issues. With unemployment at 11 per cent and inflation running at over 20 per cent it would be astonishing if that were not still the case. But the latest opinion polls show that the North is creeping up as an issue and this is reflected in the campaign.

For Mr Haughey, who has from the start staked his political future on his Northern policy, the voters' perceptions of his successful handling of the problem to date could be the key factor in this election. He enters the campaign badly bruised. His claim to have established a 'special relationship' with Mrs Thatcher which could in time transform not only the Northern situation but the whole of Anglo-Irish relations, has been cruelly exposed by his failure to influence her over the hunger strike. He has consistently refused to criticise the British Premier in public and this has brought him under considerable pressure from the Republican wing of his own party. Added to this, the riots in Dublin which followed the death of Bobby Sands have reactivated all the old fears that the Northern violence could spill over to the South. If there were to be more street rioting during the campaign the electorate might well feel safer with Dr ▶

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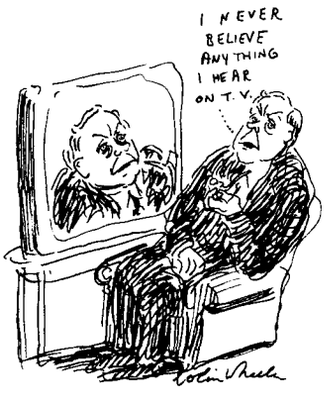
Martin Bailey on a startling confession

'I never tried to oust Smith'

SIR HAROLD WILSON is now making the astonishing claim that the British Government never intended to topple the illegal Smith regime at UDI. In a TV interview to be broadcast next week (BBC2, Tuesday, 2 June, 5.15) the former Prime Minister is asked if the idea of sanctions in 1965 was 'to force Smith out'. 'No, it wasn't', Wilson now admits. Right from the start there was no way of getting Smith out, and a new government in. 'We'd no means of doing it, we couldn't put the troops in. No, we never really tried to change him, or to put anybody in . . .'

Yet back in January 1966 Wilson had solemnly told a Commonwealth summit in Lagos that Rhodesia was 'fundamentally a moral problem' which 'could be settled only one way if we were to maintain a world civilisation based on equality'. Smith had committed 'treason' against the Crown, and



Britain would never negotiate with him: 'Mr Smith could only approach the Governor under conditions of surrender.' Oil sanctions were biting — and if there were a 'leakage' of oil, then Britain 'would not oppose any United Nations resolution on the matter'. Smith had been warned about oil sanctions before UDI. But Wilson told Commonwealth leaders that his own impression was that 'Mr Smith lived very much in a dream world of his own'. The oil embargo would bring Rhodesia to its knees 'within weeks, rather than months'.

Rob Edwards on a planning loophole which avoids inquiry

Go-ahead for Trident base

THE WAY is clear for the Ministry of Defence to start work next year on its proposed seven-fold expansion of the Coulport nuclear missile depot on the Clyde in order to accommodate the new £6,000 million Trident system. As an arm of government, it doesn't have to apply for planning permission to the relevant local authority (in this instance Dumbarton district): it merely has to engage in 'consultation' — a process that began last week with the visit to Dumbarton of a high-level MoD team headed by Lord Trenchard, the Minister of State for Defence and a late substitute for sacked Navy Minister Keith Speed.

It is entirely up to the Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger, to decide how the proposal should be handled: he can either allow informal discussions between relevant parties, or invite written comments, or hold a public inquiry. Although the majority Labour group on Dumbarton Council has already said that it will be calling for an inquiry, the Scottish Office is reportedly reluctant to provide such a platform for the growing disarmament lobby. The refusal to allow any inquiry would contrast strangely with Mr Younger's decision last December to hold an inquiry into NATO's comparatively minor £40 million plan to extend Stornoway airport, the result of which is expected shortly.

CND's plans to march from the Faslane Polaris base close to Coulport to Glasgow next weekend — now officially exempted from a ban on marches following an embarrassing about-turn by Strathclyde Regional Council — have been given a boost by the MoD plans, the huge scale of which took everyone by surprise. The amount of land required by the MoD on the Rosneath Peninsula between Gare Loch and Loch Long is due to rise from the existing 309 to over 2,300 acres. Further impetus last week came from Glasgow District Council who became the second authority in Scotland (following West Lothian) to declare their area a nuclear-free zone and to announce their intention not to take part in any future nuclear civil defence exercises.

▶ torate might well feel safer with Dr Garret Fitzgerald, whose Fine Gael party has a strong tradition on law and order.

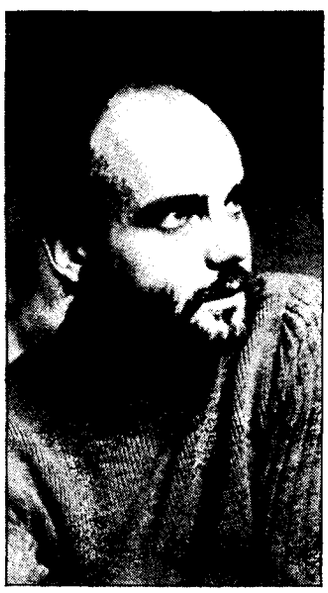
Now there is the prospect that the H Block Committee will run candidates, officially or unofficially, specifically attacking Mr Haughey for not taking a tougher public line with Britain. In the United Kingdom, with a simple majority voting system, this might be no more than a minor irritant. But Ireland has multi-seat constituencies in which candidates are elected by a complex method of proportional representation. Some contests go to a seventh or eighth count. In this situation candidates who might normally hope to get elected on second or third reference transfers could well be at risk if these votes go to opponents who support the hunger strikers. Those most at risk will be members of Mr Haughey's Fianna Fail party, particularly in border areas and in the West of Ireland where Republican sympathies are strong.

Border swoop on 'anti-state matter' starts crack-down on dissidents, reports Jan Kavan

Czech authorities plan trial to crush Charter '77

THE PRAGUE REGIME appears determined to stage a show-trial this summer on a 1950s scale: the object being to try to crush, finally, the Charter '77 group. So far 10 people — journalists, writers, historians, a philosopher, a psychologist and a young worker — have been charged with 'subversion of the Republic . . . in co-operation with a foreign power', under Article 98/2ab, carrying penalties of 3-10 years.

Those detained include radio and TV commentator **Karl Kyncl** and **Jan Ruml**, an especially active member of the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS). Others have been charged and allowed out, including **Jiri Hajek**, the former Foreign Minister; **Olga** and **Ivan Havel**, brother and sister of imprisoned playwright



Jan Ruml, charged with subversion

Vaclav Haval; and **Miro Kusy**, who in 1968 was head of the Slovak Communist Party's ideological department.

Libuse Silhanova, whose husband acted as General Secretary of the Czechoslovak Party while Dubcek was held in Moscow during 1968, was also detained, but later released without charge.

All are signatories or sympathisers of Charter 77, and are accused of involvement in smuggling literature into Czechoslovakia and smuggling information about the human-rights movement out. They were picked up after the arrest at the Austrian border of two young French socialists who, according to the Czech news-agency, were trying to enter Czechoslovakia with 'anti-state matter and records aimed against the socialist social system'. In secret compartments of their vehicle were 'special technical means for subversive activity and large sums of Western currency . . .'

Following a widespread campaign in France (Lionel Jospin, First Secretary of the French Socialist Party, was among tens of thousands of signatories to a petition), Gilles Thonon, 29, and Francoise Anis, 23, have been released.

The 'anti-state' materials consisted of books and magazines in Czech, such as *Listy,* published by Jiri Pelikan, who is an MEP for the Italian Socialists, together with novels, poetry and memoirs by authors banned in Czechoslovakia, records by banned Czech folk singers and rock groups, and specialist books of philosophy, sociology, psychology, history and ecology written in English, French and German. The 'technical means for subvesive activity' refers to a simple portable duplicator.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — which Czechoslovakia ratified in 1976 — states that everyone shall have the right to 'seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers . . .' It is in fact the Prague regime's consistent violation of this covenant which makes it necessary to import socialist literature clandestinely. And the official suggestion that large sums of money were being carried is a huge exaggeration: Gilles Thonon says that they had DM4,000 (about £840) which was their own personal holiday money. He is now taking legal steps to recover it from Czechoslovak customs.

Three real reasons lie behind the trial being prepared. First, to silence Charter 77, which despite arrests has remained the only alternative voice in a silenced society.

Second, to suppress all independent cultural and scholarly activity: among those detained and accused are some of the most prolific *samizdat* writers, and some of the organisers of the independent 'Patocka university'.

Third is the regime's fear of a possible spill over from Poland. The Czech news agency says that the interrogation of Thonon and Anis provided 'evidence about . . . hostile activities against Czechoslovakia *and other socialist countries.*' Neither of them admits having provided any such evidence, but that will not prevent its being fabricated.

Anis and Thonon, before their release, were tricked into being filmed for a TV 'reconstruction' of events which never, in fact, occurred, and it can be assumed that a 'documentary' will be produced to accompany the trial. This will probably be staged in the summer, to minimise Western political attention: the least that Western politicians can do is to ensure that the proceedings be made public, and that international observers be admitted.

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Cyprus connection: Claudia Wright reports

Dial-a-coup Kissinger

GLAFKOS CLERIDES' breakthrough in the Cyprus elections on Sunday — as the constitutional conservative — was shadowed by last-minute evidence of his complicity with Henry Kissinger in attempts to profit from the 1974 military coup against President Makarios. Clerides responded electorally with a cry of 'Fake!' But the facts help to assess the attitudes of a newly influential actor in the East Mediterranean theatre.

In summer 1974 Nicos Sampson, an anti-Turkish terrorist backed by the Athens colonels, seized power in Cyprus: President Makarios barely escaped from the island alive. Sampson's coup precipitated the Turkish invasion: an event which the simple colonels had failed to forsee, and which their American supporters failed to stave off. In embattled Cyprus, Clerides was sworn as acting-President, pending Makarios' return.

The new evidence is a heavily-censored State Department log of a phone-call from Clerides to Secretary Kissinger on 19 August 1974. The occasion was tragic: US Ambassador Rodger Davies had just been killed in a Nicosia demonstration which originated in furious Greek Cypriot suspicions about the role of the United States. After an exchange of condolences, Clerides said that the night before he and Davies had spoken:

> about the points you mentioned, and today I was going to elaborate. But unfortunately, for him it is too late.

State Department censors have deleted much of what followed (the document was obtained through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit), but it seems clear that Kissinger wished to re-iterate an American desire to 'use our influence to produce the most favourable outcome' to the previous month's events. This included keeping Clerides as President, and preventing Makarios (the 'Castro of the Eastern Mediterranean') from returning.

Clerides in return promised Kissinger on the phone that he would do his utmost to 'press upon the people' that there was no reason for suspicion of US policy:

> I will continue bringing all I can to prevent any anti-American feelings or anti-American demonstrations in Cyprus.

Clerides' reward was immediate US recognition as legitimate President, coupled with a diplomatic brush-off for Makarios. Laurence Stern of the *Washington Post* revealed the involvement of US officials in plotting for Makarios' overthrow: what is new is proof that Clerides negotiated directly with Kissinger in support of his own power-grab. (It failed, because popular support forced Makarios' return.)

Seven years on, with Al Haig at the State Department, Cyprus is even more indispensable to the US as an electronic listening-post. That role would become impossible should the dream of the Greek Cypriot left and centre ever become true: negotiated Turkish withdrawal, plus complete demilitarisation of the island. Whatever deals may be done, Clerides — who now has a genuine electoral base — is able to ensure that Cyprus stays in the international front-line.

Duncan Campbell finds out military plans in the English countryside

US builds World War III hospital in Britain

THE UNITED STATES Air Force is to construct a new, 1,000-bed hospital and medical facility, to be kept empty for wartime use only. The new 'wartime medical complex' will be at Little Rissington, Gloucestershire, an RAF fighter airfield, formerly disused.

The base is now being developed as a medical store. Two further developments will provide a 500-bed wartime hospital and then a 500-bed 'aeromedical staging unit'. The new Little Rissington base will supplement already extensive medical facilities in Britain including a USAF Regional hospital at the Lakenheath nuclear bomber base in East Anglia. However, Little Rissington is located much further west than the other USAF bases, and is no doubt considered safer.

The Ministry of Defence last week agreed that the Little Rissington base had been given to the USAF without any public announcement about 'four or five months ago'. A spokesman said it would be 'a store for drugs and medicines and things like that'.

Other new developments aimed at providing the USAF with a prolonged war-fighting capacity in Britain have been revealed in the semi-official *Air Force* magazine. The RAF and USAF have extensively rehearsed aircraft battle damage repair procedures for getting damaged fighters back into combat quickly. Another recently arrived unit with a similar purpose is the so-called 'Red Horse' squadron now based at Wethersfield in Essex, whose job is to repair damaged runways at British USAF bases, after a Soviet attack.

Patrick Wintour explains how both Militant and the Right-wing lost out in Ladywood

The constituency that dared to ditch its MP

LAST WEEK'S DECISION of Ladywood Labour Party not to reselect its current MP, Mr John Sever, has been portrayed in the press as a coup by a tightly-knit group of SSRC-funded Marxist lecturers. In the words of Mr Stanley Sparks, political editor of the Birmingham *Evening Mail*: 'Left wing infiltrators, militants and Trotskyists have gradually moved in on the four ward parties that make up the constituency and gained election to key officerships and control of delegations to the constitutency general management committee . . .' No-one could pretend that the Ladywood Left have cornered the market in virtue, but nor can they be dismissed as enemies of democracy.

So far there have been 13 reselection conferences: 12 have retained their current MPs — a fact no less remarkable than that one has chosen a new candidate. The story of Ladywood is not simply that of a decent moderate being ditched by 'outside agitators'. It is the story of a constituency party, long controlled by the Right and in a state of sorry decay, in which a number of individuals, mainly left-wingers, have begun the unglamorous hard work of building it up again.

The chief force behind Mr Sever's ejection was not Trotskyist but Tribunite. (A Militant candidate stood, and was wiped out, collecting only four votes.) Moreover, it was predominantly working-class — despite the fact that Friday's victor, Mr Albert Bore, is a university lecturer. The constituency's senior officers, who supported Bore, are railway workers and post office engineers; and they have lived in the constituency for years.

In the mid-1970s, according to the current chairman Bob Hoole, Ladywood Labour Party had less than 150 members, only ten of whom attended meetings of the General Management Committee. In charge of this *ancien regime* were the constituency's MP, former university lecturer Brian Walden, its chairman John Sever and one Peter Marriner, party agent. When Walden joined TV's *Weekend World*, causing a by-election, it emerged that Marriner was in fact a lifelong supporter of the fascist British Movement. Walden had always insisted that Peter was a 100-percent Labour man.

SINCE THEN, the party membership has begun to increase — but it is still very small. All Saints ward, from which Sever himself hails, has approximately 50 members; its meetings are often inquorate. Rotton Park ward can boast only 40 members and has been in the hands of the liberals since 1977. Recently a group of left-wingers within the ward has been trying to counteract Liberal propaganda by producing a newsletter and holding public meetings.

John Sever, MP

Membership in Ladywood ward was 20 and falling when Albert Bore, a former district party secretary, was elected as its city councillor in 1980; since then, the numbers have only doubled, but at least the decline has been reversed. Ladywood ward is regarded locally as right-wing: significantly, rather than backing Sever for reselection, it nominated Bore.

Soho Ward is the largest in the constituency. Its relationship with Sever has been poor ever since he won the candidacy after Walden's abrupt departure. At the time, Soho members had their own nominee — Keith Hill, Roy Hattersley's political adviser — and since theirs was the largest ward, they had reason to believe that he would at least be short-listed for an interview. However, the constituency's executive committee, effectively run by Peter Marriner, ruled out Hill from the start. Soho members felt they had been snubbed — and although Sever was not directly implicated, it was clear that he was not only the prime beneficiary of the move, but also, as constituency chairman, had been in a position to influence the decision.

SERIOUS DIFFERENCES between Sever and the constituency as a whole emerged in February 1979. It was the 'winter of discontent' and public sector workers were on strike. Sever asked a question in the Commons of David Ennals, then Secretary of State for Health: what steps could be taken in the Greater Birmingham Area, he asked, to draft troops and vehicles into the health service strike? For that, his constituency party passed a motion of censure against him. Shortly afterwards, the GMC confirmed Sever as candidate for the forthcoming general election — but only because it was

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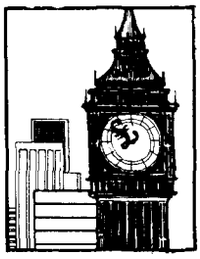

Peter Kellner, Political Editor

Healey, Benn and the killer instinct

LAST AUTUMN, during the Labour Party leadership contest, more than one MP had an argumentative run-in with his local party. One of them, Kenneth Marks, declared his intention to vote for Peter Shore in round one and for Denis Healey in round two. His local activists in Manchester demanded that he vote for Foot, but Marks declined.

Michael Foot heard about this pressure and wrote to Marks — not to back the activists but to comfort the MP. You vote for whom you want, the message ran: if you then run into trouble, I shall speak in your defence.

This incident is being recalled by right-wing Labour MPs to dramatise the difference between last autumn's and next autumn's battles: can you imagine Tony Benn, they ask, making such an offer?

There is, as it happens, a ready answer to this question. Under the old system of election, the only say any constituency had in the choice of party leader was through its MP (if it was lucky enough to have a Labour member). Now, with the electoral college, constituencies and MPs each have votes in their respective sections. As one right-of-centre MP put it this week, 'last time my general management committee was trying to influence my vote; this time *I* shall be trying to influence *their* vote.'

On the particular point he is right — all MPs worth their salary and self-respect should be able to see off local Stalinists who would dictate their every move, on pain of deselection. There is, though, a deeper issue, concerning not simply — or even mainly — the 'independence' of MPs. It concerns the compatibility of Labour's left and right wings. Does either really want the other in the party at all?

In formal terms the answer is clear. Broad church . . . party of tolerance . . . let a hundred flowers bloom . . . this great movement of ours: the rhetoric of adhesion is one of those devices, like appeals to the memory of Clement Attlee, that few dare question. In fact it has always been a hypocritical charade. The right invariably takes every opportunity to be beastly to the left, and *vice versa*. But, like rival regiments, they have always considered themselves ultimately part of the same army, with the same common enemy; so it was a charade the party could afford.

WITH THE BATTLE for the deputy leadership the charade is over. Tony Benn and Denis Healey transparently hate each other's guts; more to the point (personal rivalries being nothing new to the party) they fundamentally despise the kind of politics the other represents.

To Benn's left, the main lesson of the last two Labour governments is that right-wing Labour policies fail to achieve full employment, fail to secure redistribution, and, at the end of the day, fail to ensure the party's re-election at the polls. Left-wing policies are therefore needed — *together with the means to make sure they are implemented.*

To Healey's right, the evidence of all the opinion polls points to the unpopularity of many left-wing policies — on nationalisation, high taxation and public spending, abolition of the House of Lords, and so on. It is not just a matter of specific policies. Over the past 30 years an increasing proportion of Labour voters have become home-owners and car-owners — people with living standards they want to defend, for whom the class war is a remote abstraction. If Benn's left takes over, they argue, Labour will never win another election.

THE DEFECTS in the rival camps boil down to this. Benn's Labour Party would offer socialism but not power, while Healey's would offer power but not socialism. Faced with this choice, Healey's supporters have the easier case to make; and they are already making it. The last Labour government may not have been the best thing since wholemeal bread, but compared with Thatcherism, it was surely paradise. When the time comes, wouldn't you rather have more of our mild radicalism than the iron lady's mad monetarism? Benn and his mob will simply have to grin and bear it — they have to stay in the Labour Party for there is nowhere else for them to go.

Benn has a trickier problem. The right do have somewhere else to go — the Social Democratic Party. Many of Benn's supporters would even approve of a mass desertion by the right: it would cleanse the party of 'anti-socialist elements'. Those who stay, like Roy Hattersley ('Labour was the party I was born in and it's the party I'll die in') would be allowed to remain members, on sufferance but without influence.

If John Silkin offered a plausible way out of this dilemma, it would be tempting to support him; but it is difficult to work up enthusiasm for a property-dealer who served on the board of Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press and who confessed he was 'too busy' on departmental matters to support the left in the IMF debates in Cabinet in 1976. (That is not to say his personal flaws are any deeper than Benn's or Healey's, only different.)

Unlike Silkin, both Benn and Healey have the merit that by contesting the deputy leadership they are posing questions about the nature of the Labour Party that have traditionally been fudged. But what neither has yet told us is: should this autumn's victor attempt to make peace with the vanquished: and if so, how? Or should one of them be left to die a political death, twisting slowly in the wind? □

felt that a public split at that time would be an electoral disaster.

More bridges were burned last September, when Sever announced on *Panorama* that he was 'a victim of undemocratic tactics' in his party. The following day, he told the *Birmingham Post* that he was 'fed up to the backteeth with Militant troublemakers' in his constituency. As the reselection drew close in February, he told the Birmingham *Evening Mail* that 'members of the Militant Tendency had held on to all the key posts of the Soho ward'. In fact, out of 13 officerships in the ward only two junior posts were held by Militant supporters, and at a recent, well-attended AGM one of them lost his post. The local membership secretary said: 'We are trying to get people to join the party. It's very difficult if the MP is telling the world it's a living hell in here.'

Bob Hoole, the constituency chairman, explains that 'a growing problem of communication' had developed between the party and Sever. Indeed the MP admitted as much at Friday's reselection meeting when he promised 'drastic changes' in his relationship with the party if they let him stay on.

Sever was not conspicuously interested in the views of party activists, nor in explaining his own opinions to the GMC. One exasperated party member says: 'I met him quite a lot because our ward is quite right wing and so he visited it; funnily enough it was very difficult to get him to talk about politics.' In 1980 when Sever signed a motion calling for the Parliamentary Party alone to elect Callaghan's successor, he was asked by the GMC to discuss the matter: 'I do not wish to comment' he replied.

JOHN SEVER'S chief complaint has been that since last November new recruits to the Soho ward, supporters of Sever, have been prevented from joining the party by left-wing officers. He told the *Evening Mail*: 'The Left want a return to what they call real socialism. This seems to include these days denying membership of the Labour Party to working men and women.'

After years of barren membership drives and with re-selection imminent, Sever's supporters had suddenly secured 70 new recruits. The left-wing Soho ward secretary, Simon Petritz, informed the ward meeting on 11 December that this flood of applicants had occurred, but said that many of the forms had been filled in incorrectly. With the agreement of the Party regional organiser, Freda Westwood, the ward officers decided to check out the applications. It emerged that some of the addresses were wrong and that some occupants had no knowledge of their applications. However, many were eventually admitted — indeed, enough to secure the Soho nomination for Sever.

Even if they had all been admitted immediately in December, they could not have swung Friday's selection meeting in favour of Sever. Under Labour Party rules, once a reselection process starts, the GMC (which acts as the selection committee) is frozen. In Ladywood's case, the 35-strong GMC, elected in March 1980, was the relevant body. Both Left and Right in Ladywood acknowledge that a GMC of 35 is unsatisfactorily small to elect a parliamentary candidate. The first thing needed is more members. Beyond that they might consider the example of Albert Bore's home constituency of Birmingham Selly Oak. There they practise, with certain provisos, a system of one person, one vote. A chief advocate of this has been Albert Bore. □

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DEFENCE

Messing about in boats

When Mrs Thatcher fired her Navy Minister, she resembled a malaria patient swatting a lone mosquito. British politicians — whether trimming or expanding the Admiralty's bill — have always assumed the Navy to be, somehow, workable. Today some are growing uneasily aware that this all-pervading assumption is untenable. The 1981 Navy, though sensationally expensive, is no longer able to defend our shores, protect our harbours and guard our trade. Not that Britain's maritime dependence has lessened since Cromwell's day: we now have an offshore zone which by 1985 will contribute some £3 billion of gross domestic product, and even if our trade is now less far-flung, and chiefly European, all but a tiny fraction goes by sea. Generally, the Navy's condition may be the work of a political system ill-at ease with positions subtler than outright militarism or outright pacifism. But, as PHILIP GEDDES reports, a particular part of the story is the Navy's own bureaucratic incompetence, which has turned out to be a force more destructive than anything Hitler's U-boats could unleash.

IF IT'S TRUE that the Royal Navy (in Blackstone's words) is 'our greatest defence and ornament', it is a defence which diminishes in efficacy every year — and at a cost which is anything but ornamental.

It possesses, today, less than 100 front-line ships, where there were 200 a quarter-century ago. As the recruitment ads say, these craft are extremely complex, and elaborately armed. But they are also amazingly expensive, and becoming more so. The *Leander* class frigates, the last of which was commissioned eight years ago —and proved quite efficient — cost £7 million each.

Their successors, the all-missile-armed Type 22 frigates, cost £130 million each.

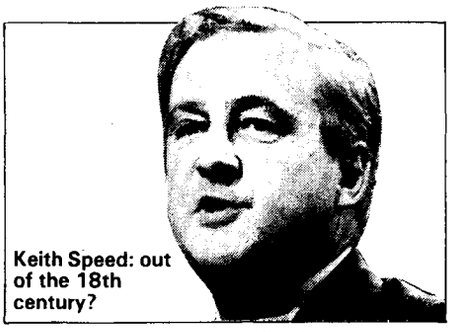
This kind of increase in the cost of the fleet's basic warship type — which is what the frigates supposedly are — could mean that the replacement bill for the *Leanders* would reach £2.5 billion, which today is the navy's total annual budget. On top of this, it's presumed that many other ships are going to need replacing soon, particularly the *Oberon*-class submarines and the elderly *Ton*-class minesweepers. And, of course, Mrs Thatcher also wants to acquire a new Trident missile submarine fleet at a cost of £5 billion — sorry, I'll read that again, £6 billion. At this rate, there will soon be no money left to pay the Navy's existing officers and ratings, let alone maintenance bills.

Almost whatever happens, the *number* of ships will continue to go down, and as no ship, however elaborate, can be in two places at once, this means Britain's naval commitment must be scaled down to something that can be covered. For all their talk about 'realism' and 'withdrawal', successive governments have demanded, or endorsed, a remarkably far-flung battle line.

For instance, on 30 October 1979 nearly one-quarter of the Navy's front-line ships, and nearly half its support vessels, were deployed outside our main area of NATO responsibility. Some of them were as far away as the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. This may be good for the crew's suntans, and provide a way of keeping in with the Americans. But more immediate responsibilities inevitably suffer.

It is now doubtful whether the RN could keep open more than one port against a determined minelaying campaign. The fishery-protection and offshore-resources squadron is something of a joke — sometimes, its ships can be outrun by modern trawlers. There are virtually no patrol boats of coastal forces (though the Russians have numerous fast missile-boats), and no warships designed for operations in the confines of the North Sea (nor any air cover for them if there were). If the British commitment to reinforce European land forces were to be taken seriously (is it meant to be?) Townsend Thoresen ferries would have to help out.

What the Navy *does* have is a highly complex version of the high seas battle-fleet, which proved itself to be marginal in two world wars. This is where a lot of the money goes — a group task force of carriers, frigates and destroyers is an investment of more than £750 million — and to highly precarious effect. Most missile experts reckon that one



Keith Speed: out of the 18th century?

in three of the missiles fired at a modern warship will hit or near-miss, which means that the 'gold-plated fleet' could scarcely be risked in battle.

IF BRITAIN'S POLITICAL leadership remains muddled about the Navy's role, this confusion is richly compounded by administrative and bureaucratic disorder.

It isn't just a matter of too many civilian officials. What young people reading the officer recruitment ads aren't told is that the RN is already hopelessly over-manned at officer level. Today, there is an admiral for every front-line ship in commission.

Prospects of a sea-going command become steadily more remote as the number of ships decreases — at present, only one-fifth of RN officers have sea-going work — and the pressure to create shore jobs grows by inverse relationship.

Realistically, the Navy needs to retire a considerable number of its officers between the ranks of Lieutenant-Commander and Captain, so as to provide a tolerable career structure for those who remain. So far, the large numbers of officers employed on desk duties — there are, for instance, 170 just in the ship-design department at Bath — has been justified on the grounds that it provides a feedback into the shore-bases of sea-going experience. But how can this argument stand up when sea-going experience is becoming so much rarer?

Civilian employment under Admiralty management provides a record which is even less defensible. There are 32,000 people employed in the naval dockyards at Rosyth, Portsmouth, Chatham and Devonport. Unlike most of British industry, which has an appalling productivity level that is gradually improving, the dockyards have an appalling productivity level which is getting steadily worse.

In 1971-2 the Public Accounts Committee investigated the dockyards, and recommended sweeping reforms. Almost no changes were made, and the throughput of ships actually became slower, with refitting projects continuing to over-run both in cost and in time. Three *Leander*-class frigates, in four major refits at Devonport between 1970 and 1974, exceeded cost estimates by an average of 25 per cent and exceeded their time allocations by nearly 50 per cent. In 1976 another of them, HMS *Cleopatra,* suffered a 33 per cent cost over-run.

DOCKYARD REFORM has been an Admiralty priority for more than a decade, with no progress to date. The latest internal committee on dockyards, chaired by the unfortunate Mr Keith Speed as Navy Minister, reported last August. It said that

> radical action is required to resolve the deep-seated causes of the cycle of declining capacity and loss of morale in which the dockyards are at present trapped.

It then went on to propose some rather modest measures — more pay for skilled craftsmen, greater use of sub-contractors, and new methods of cost-estimation. This, in Mr Speed's words, would drag the dockyards

> out of the eighteenth century well into the 20th.

Mr Speed's proposals had a familiar air. In fact, they were proposed ten years ago by one of his predecessors, and to remarkably little effect.

No doubt more sub-contracting makes sense. Much re-fit work involves the installation of new weapons, and presumably the contractors who build the weapons do handle the work adequately. But Speed's committee ducked one truly radical option — namely, to close down some part of the

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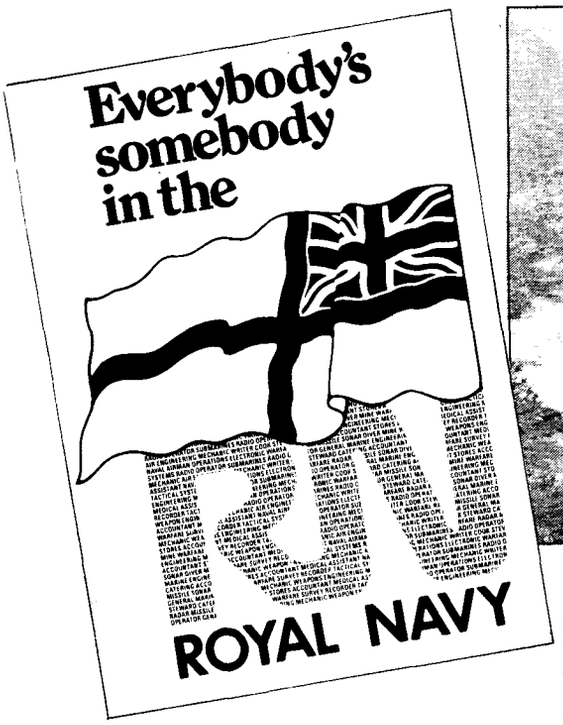
dockyard system, and contract out the repair and re-fit work.

Nuclear-powered submarines, at present, are re-fitted at Chatham dockyard. But at the same time the taxpayer maintains an expensive nuclear-submarine *building* capacity at Vickers, Barrow-in-Furness. Even if everyone were to agree that Britain needs nuclear-engined submarines,it hardly follows that two costly yards should be maintained to do fundamentally similar work.

The Navy has always maintained that the workload justifies four dockyards. But this is true only in the sense of Parkinson's dictum that work will, if permitted, expand to fill the time available for its completion. Labour politicians have been prepared, in the abstract, to suggest that military spending ought to be cut to pay for social services — but have been unwilling to face up to the job loss involved in closing or modernising



Right: HMS Invincible, nicknamed Unfinishable: today's Navy has one ship per Admiral. Left: The Navy recruiters appear to forget W.S. Gilbert's observation that 'when everybody's somebody, no-one's anybody'.

naval dockyards. Tory politicians, anxious to portray themselves as the upholders of Britain's defence systems, have been unwilling to face the fact that no defence budget can work without priorities.

THE PROBLEM of British Shipbuilders is closely, even incestuously related to the problem of the Navy. Today, the Admiralty keeps BS afloat — three-quarters of its current order-book consists of warships, nearly all for the RN. Since nationalisation, BS has not received any overseas orders for major warships, and as construction takes about twice as long as it does in German yards, it isn't likely to.

The economic relationship of monopolist and monopsonist which exists between BS and the RN was cemented bureaucratically in 1979 by a curious appointment. The Navy's Director-General of Ships, Jack Daniel, became the BS director responsible for warship building. Outsiders now claim to perceive in BS an intensification of the obsession with doing things the official Navy way — to the detriment of modest, independent designs for vessels which might find legitimate overseas markets.

There are many cautionary tales about the Admiralty's incapacity in design and development work, but the saga of the Sting Ray is the most alarming. In the late 60s, the need was perceived for a new anti-submarine torpedo, chiefly to be employed in helicopters, and the Admiralty's Underwater Weapons Establishment at Portland was put on the job. By the mid-70s, £40 million had been spent, with little to show for it beyond the discovery (in the words of a civil servant to the Public Accounts Committee) that

> people did not know what they did not know.

By end-1979 the project was employing 4,500 people (most of them skilled engineers, which Britain remains short of despite unemployment). The String Ray torpedo isn't expected in service until the mid-80s, and then only because project management has been handed over to Marconi Space & Development. Numbers employed at Portland have not substantially diminished in the absence of this major project. Before Sting Ray, the Mark 31 torpedo project got out of hand in similar fashion. And three other underwater defence projects — Sonar 2016, Sonar 2020 and Tigerfish — are 50 per cent to 150 per cent over budget.

No part of the Navy is as controversial as its lavish design centre at Bath, where ships are still designed in the format of yesterday's ocean greyhounds, in spite of the fact that modern weapons and electronics systems fit very uneasily into that classic outline. Because of their need to be mounted high up, they cause stability problems for traditional hull-forms, and the Type 21 frigates (for example) thus required costly aluminium superstructures to reduce weight.

When Bath turned a commercial trawler design into the *Island*-class offshore protection vessel, they removed too much weight, and the ships had to be fitted with expensive stabilisers which degraded their performance. More recently, Bath threw out an independent British offshore-protection design, the *Osprey*-class — which is now being built in Denmark, gaining international orders.

'JACKY' FISHER, who first tried to haul the Royal Navy into the industrial age (the problems of the task, no doubt, intensified his eccentricities), used to say that 'he who strains at the gnat of perfection, will swallow the camel of unreadiness'.

The real faults are to be found above the level of Bath's 5,700 employees, in the Byzantine decision-making systems of the Navy — the Navy, perhaps, being no more than representative of deficiencies which encumber the society at large.

Any decision has to cross a series of mountain ranges which ensure that nothing decisive can happen in less than four, often six years. Any new ship is considered by the full Admiralty Board three times, by the Operational Requirements Committee three times, by the Defence Policy Equipment Committee twice, and finally by the Chiefs of Staff. The design stage, therefore, can be half of the ship's hull-life, ensuring that it has an excellent chance of being out of date by the time it gets into service.

The anti-submarine cruiser HMS *Invincible* took 17 years from conception to becoming water-borne: among naval officers she became known, despairingly, as HMS *Unfinishable.*

SOLUTIONS to most of these problems exist, in technical theory. There are cheap variants of many kinds of naval ships, which could usefully add to the Navy's offshore capacity (perhaps doing rather more for shipyard employment figures than the construction of a few super-ships). Hovercraft could be tried out seriously as minesweepers. And, as the Navy's second new aircraft carrier, the *Ark Royal,* slides into the water next week at a cost of £220 million, it's possible to reflect that there are cheaper ways of taking aircraft to sea.

But first, there will have to be real political decisions about what the Royal Navy — over its whole history, perhaps Britain's most successful national institution — now exists to do. There are three basic options:

- The minimalist position — shading into pure pacifism — under which Britain withdraws from present treaty commitments, and attempts a coastguard-style defence of home territory;
- The continental option, in which our major effort goes into supporting NATO's German frontline, which can make the Navy into support-service for the Army and RAF;
- The sub-contracting theory, in which Britain's main role is as an unsinkable US aircraft carrier, and the Navy's main role is to help the US Navy fight the Battle of the Atlantic — while helping out with other bits-and-pieces of the global role.

Policy has, till now, lurched along on the increasingly unrealistic assumption that all three roles are perfectly compatible and economically supportable. But the remorseless rise in weapons-costs, and the steady decline in Britain's economic performance has, at last, destroyed the illusion. Trident, whatever its rights and wrongs, is only one, dramatic symptom of crisis: even if it were cancelled tomorrow, the Navy's problems would not vanish with it.

But, given that Parliament can summon up the will-power to make some basic decisions, that will only be the beginning of the process. The administrative, technological and bureaucratic mess that will have to be reformed before policy can become practice is quite as formidable as anything Samuel Pepys had to encounter.

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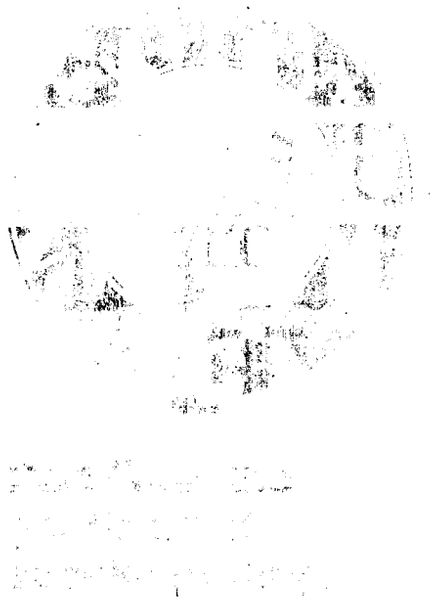


THE SECRET WORLD is a substantial part of the British Establishment, and its higher-ranking practitioners are unable to resist the flattery of gongs and *Who's Who* entries. Thereon, a contradiction arises: how do you accord suitable trappings for a career in departments which, formally, do not exist?

Thus, the *Who's Who* entry for a spook will contain words which reveal precisely the matter they are supposed to conceal. For example, we have the (acknowledged) head of MI5 (1965-72) making *Who's Who* for the first time in 1957:

> **FURNIVAL'JONES, Edward Martin,** CBE 1957; *b* 7 May 1912 . . . attached War Office

Later, he was 'attached to the Ministry of Defence'; the impression created being that of some high-ranking hanger-on. His colleagues used the same language, such as the much-abused Sir Roger Hollis (. . . CB 1956, attached War Office) and Sir Dick Goldsmith White (. . . KBE 1955, attached to War Office). Lesser-known individuals, such as Graham Smith and Alexander Kellar (qv, next week), who never directed MI5, appear with similar, minimal biographical information.

MI5 officials usually do not surface until they acquire their first substantial gong, and the same applies to some members of MI6, the Secret Intelligence Service. But MI6 also includes a good many whose existence has to be acknowledged to the world, because of diplomatic cover. Some, like the late Sir Maurice Oldfield, have presented long, well-documented 'careers' in the Foreign Office: others, like the current head of MI6, Sir Arthur Franks, have terser, less convincing entries.

But in any case, the spooks abroad (who collectively make up well over 15 per cent of our 'diplomats') conceal their true role only from the naive. In the secure, much-coveted SIS job in Washington, for instance, the incumbent might as well announce his arrival in the *Washington Post*, for the diplomatic cover-post in the Embassy is so well established as to be instantly obvious to the Russians. The 1949-51 appointee was one of 'theirs' (Kim Philby, below), and since then several senior SIS men have used the same cover: John Bruce Lockhart (51-53); Maurice Oldfield (60-64); Oldfield's friend John Halket Baddeley (72-6, also deceased). John Murley, the present holder (see below) has no such diplomatic record as to justify the rank of Counsellor (the Diplomatic Service List, normally, mentions even senior secretaries).

No entry in Who's Who

Contributions from Duncan Campbell, David Leigh, Andy Thomas, Bruce Page.

Correction: By a grotesque oversight last week, we gave the Duke of Westminster's family name as Cavendish, instead of Grosvenor.

FRANKS, Sir Arthur Temple ('Dickie') KCMG 1979; Chief, Secret Intelligence Service since 1979. Born 1920, ed. Rugby & Oxford. Served, WW2, Special Operations Executive. SIS, London 1949; Middle East 1952; Tehran Embassy 1953 (appointment followed successful overthrow of elected Mossadeqh govt & installation of the Shah). SIS Chief, Bonn, 1962. SIS Divisional Head, London 1966. CMG 1967. Address: Century House, Waterloo Bridge Rd, London SE1.

LONGRIGG, John Stephen, Deputy Chief, Secret Intelligence Service, believed since 1979. Born 1923, ed. Rugby & Oxford. War service in Army, 1942-5. SIS career under diplomatic cover since 1948: posts in Paris, Baghdad, Dakar, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Washington, Bahrain (these not always listed, though he holds diplomatic privileges). Counsellor, Foreign Office, 1969 (cover as SIS Divisional Head); chief of SIS Station, Hong Kong, 1974-6. CMG 1973.

ROWLEY, Frederick Allan, retired: Deputy Chief, Secret Intelligence Service approx 1976-9. Born 1922, war service Indian Army. SIS under FO cover since 1948: posts in Ethiopia, Burma, Singapore (Far East Intelligence HQ), seconded to Australian secret intelligence service 1960; retired from FO, 1964-7, for unknown project; Divisional Head, SIS, 1972. Director & Co-ordinator of Intelligence, N. Ireland, 1972-3 (listed as 'attached N. Ireland Office'). OBE, 1959.

MURLEY, John Tregarthen, SIS liaison officer with CIA, Washington, since 1976, cover as 'Counsellor', British Embassy, Washington. Born 1928: ed. University Coll London (1st class hons. history) & St Antony's Coll. Oxford (D.Phil 1955). Joined SIS, 1955, no overseas posting under diplomatic cover. Publications: *The Origin and Outbreak of the Anglo-French War, 1793.*

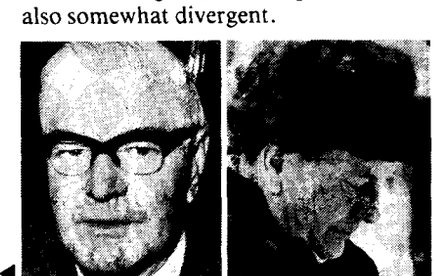
IN a good many cases, the real political allegiances of HM Spooks don't emerge until after their active careers, for better or worse, have concluded.

YOUNG, George Kennedy: former Deputy Chief, SIS; merchant banker, politician and racial theorist. Born 1911. Journalist, *Glasgow Herald* & BUP, pre-war. SIS, Vienna 1946; subsequent cover provided by Economic Relations Dept, FO and MoD. Heavily involved in SIS and CIA covert operations against Arab govts on behalf of British oil interests, 1951-3 (posted at Middle East/Intelligence HQ, Cairo). Deputy-Chief, SIS, 1953. Project AJAX, 1953: Young persuades CIA to take over SIS blueprint for anti-Mossadeqh coup: CIA agent Kermit Roosevelt (qv) infiltrated to Iran, reporting to Young in Cyprus. Bribery of crowds & assassination of loyalist police chief organised by local conspirators: Young is host at Connaught Grill celebration after coup (bill paid from secret funds). Operation STRAGGLE devised by Young, 1953 and suggested to CIA as means of removing leftist Syrian regime by means of propaganda about Soviet arms, provocation or border incidents and invasion from Iraq. Scheme elaborated to include removal of King Saud (too nationalist) and 'elimination' of Nasser with Israeli connivance. Young assures CIA that Britain ready to 'fight its last battle', but scheme turned down as too risky. Operation SALAMANDER planned by British after 1956 seizure of Suez: Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd vetoes SIS plan for assassination of Nasser. Young subsequently co-ordinates SIS involvement in CIA projects WAPPEN (anti-Syrian) and SIPONY (anti-Egyptian); both fail.

1961: Young retires early on full pension (special SIS privilege). Joins Kleinwort Benson, merchant bankers and becomes chairman of subsidiary Nuclear Fuel Finance.

Member of Conservative Party, and extreme right-wing organisations Monday Club, Society for Individual Freedom. (Chairman, Brent Cons. Assn during 70s). Unsuccessful attempt, 1972, to take over Monday Club, as insufficiently right-wing: wrote that 'the wogs are going to come in whatever we do. The Tory Party is going to be beaten and the Queer (sic) will be dethroned'. Young is on record as referring to Israeli politicians as 'snipcocks' and as alleging that Labour Cabinet Ministers are Communists. Gives radio & TV interviews on intelligence topics. Minimum fee: £100.

Young co-existed inside SIS with a more celebrated figure, whose politics were also somewhat divergent.



PHILBY, Harold Adrian Russell ('Kim'), OBE, Order of the Red Banner (USSR), Red Cross of Military Merit (Fascist Spain); consultant, KGB, Moscow since 1963 . . . Joined Soviet intelligence 1933, Vienna. Journalist, *Review of Reviews*, 1934-7. Member, Anglo-German Fellowship, 1934-8. War correspondent, *The Times*, 1937-40 (Fascist Spain, BEF, France). Section D, Secret Intelligence Service, 1940 (seconded Special Ops. Exec); Section 5, SIS, 1941 (Spain, Portugal etc). Head, Anti-Soviet section, SIS London, 1944-7 . . . 1st Secretary, UK Embassy Istanbul, 1947-9 (cover as head of SIS station); CIA liaison, British Embassy Washington 1949-51. Dismissed 1951 after defection of Burgess & Maclean (qv), whom he warned. Cleared in Parliament 1955.

Freelance intelligence agent & journalist, 1951-6. Beirut correspondent for *Observer, Economist,* SIS & KGB, 1956-63. Publication: *My Silent War,* 1967. Club: Athenaeum (expelled). Recreation: county cricket.

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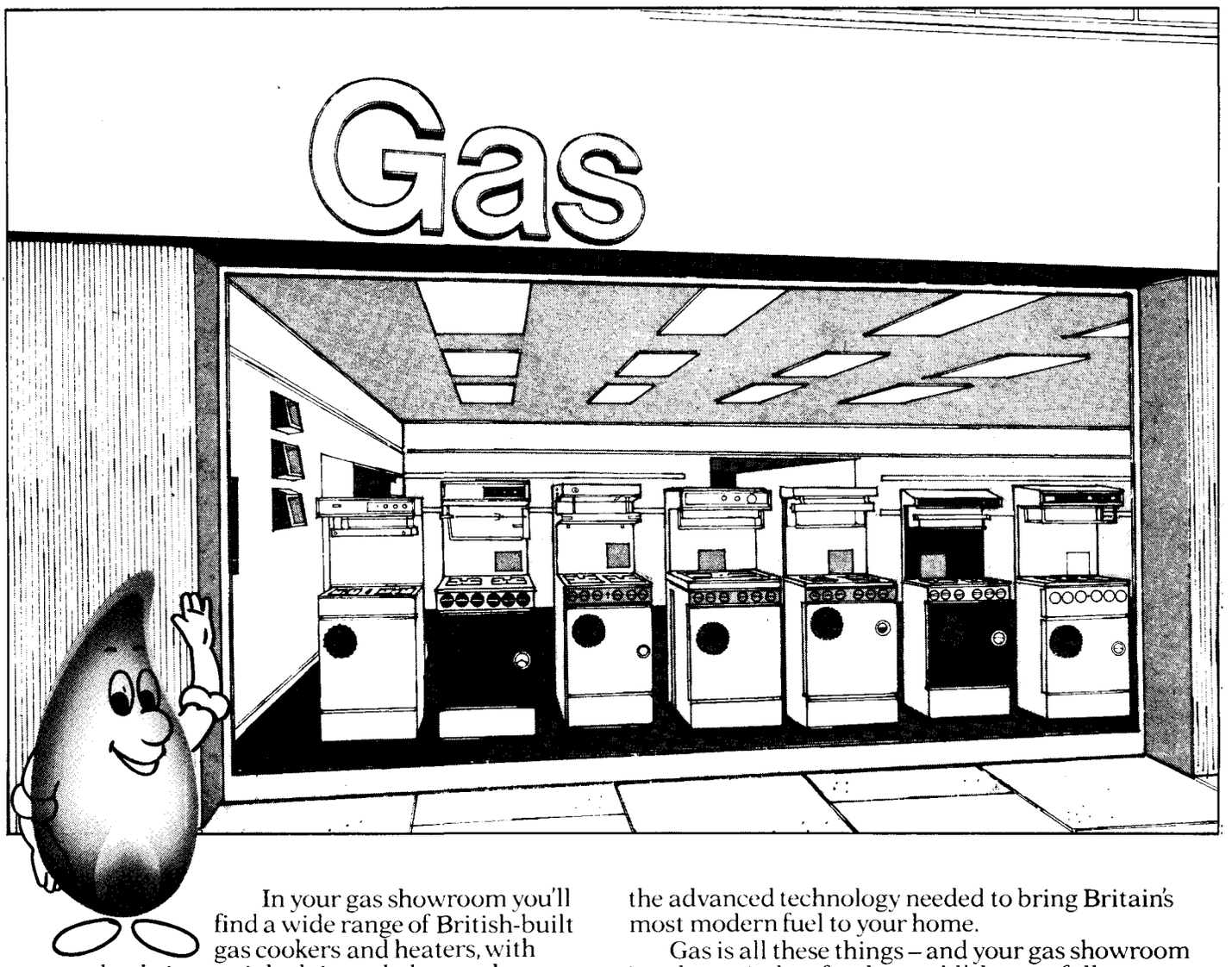
THERE'S A LOT MORE BEHIND YOUR GAS SHOWROOM THAN MEETS THE EYE.



In your gas showroom you'll find a wide range of British-built gas cookers and heaters, with completely impartial advice to help you choose.

But behind the shop window there's a chain of giant warehouses, with a comprehensive stock of spares for gas appliances new and old.

There's an army of skilled engineers, handling more than 15 million service calls a year.

There's an emergency service, ready to deal with safety calls twenty-four hours a day.

The showroom is the place where millions of people pay their bills, get expert advice about fuel running costs, energy conservation, and easy payments schemes. And behind all this, the rigs in the North Sea, representing the huge investment in the advanced technology needed to bring Britain's most modern fuel to your home.

Gas is all these things – and your gas showroom is a shop window for the world's largest fully-integrated gas industry; Britain's eighth largest commercial organisation, with almost 15 million customers, supplying nearly half of all the nation's domestic energy needs, and about a third of all the heat used in our factories and businesses.

Most importantly, though, your gas showroom provides a community service.

It's a place where customers can get help and advice, sort out their problems, and enjoy the thoroughly comprehensive service Britain's gas industry supplies.

BRITISH GAS

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Assad thrives on crisis

HELENA COBBAN on the effects of the Lebanon confrontation

'IT MAY BE THE ISRAELIS' honour to start the coming war, but it will be ours to finish it.' This is the latest wisdom coming out of the Syrian capital, Damascus; and with the Arab states increasingly lining up behind the Syrians in the missiles showdown with Israel, Damascus has every reason to appear buoyant.

Dispelled, for the moment, is the spectre which has been haunting Hafez al-Assad's regime there for the past three years: internal opposition supported by his fellow Arabs to the point where it could bring him down. The Israeli Premier's pigheadedness has forced Mr Assad's Arab counterparts to rally round him, practically on his own terms. Doubtless, in addition to financial and political measures, these will include some clause curbing outside intervention in Syria's internal affairs; previously, ever since Mr Assad spearheaded a boycott of the Arab summit in Amman last November, the other Arabs had enjoyed something of an open season inside Syria.

Not that all the opposition has been externally inspired. Over the past few years, much of it has sprung from dissatisfaction with the achievements of Mr Assad's particular brand of Arab nationalism, and from the region-wide Islamic revival as manifested in Syria's majority Sunni Muslim community. (Mr Assad comes from the Alawite sect of Island, which makes up only about 11 per cent of the Syrian population.)

Throughout the Arab world, traditional nationalist ideologies have recently been shown to be inadequate. In Syria's case, the Baathism espoused by Mr Assad as a young army officer did not prevent him, after seizing power in 1970, from opening up his country progressively towards the West. Henry Kissinger's diplomacy after the October War increased the Assad regime's dependence on the USA, if only to keep the Israeli armies at bay. The peak of Syrian hopes in the United States came in 1976, when the same gent intimated to Mr Assad that if he curbed the PLO forces in Lebanon, Uncle Sam would carve him out a nice regional niche covering Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank, in addition to Syria. Mr Assad was still dependent on the Soviets for all his weaponry; but seeking a 'middle path' between the two superpowers, he went along with Dr Kissinger's plan. But he was met, a few months after the civil war cease-fire in Lebanon, with American backing for a very different project, viz., the Sadat initiative, which expressly excluded Syria from any regional role at all.

Since then, Mr Assad has been thrown back, almost in spite of himself, into the arms of the Soviets. And as his relations with his Arab neighbours deteriorated over recent years, his reliance on the Soviets grew to the point when last October, at his urging, the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation.

WAS IT MERELY coincidental that Syria's period of cool relations with the USA should have coincided with a flowering of the Syrian opposition? Few students of the history of American dealings with post-war Syria would consider this likely. But genuine indigenous causes for dissent have multiplied within Syria too.

Baath is the Arabic for 'renaissance', but in the latter half of the Seventies it seemed to few of Syria's eight million population that this was what had been achieved by Mr Assad's party of that name. A brutal wave of petrodollar-inspired inflation infected the Syrian economy from the Gulf; emigrés returning from there had decidedly higher economic expectations than previous generations of Syrians — as did the new class of entrepreneurs nurtured by the opening to the West. Yet the State apparatus remained trapped in the old bureaucratic mould. In the gap between demand and supply, nepotism flourished, and in reaction to it, dissidence. Syria's neighbours fanned the flames of discontent: the rival Baathist regime in Iraq encouraged its adherents in north-eastern Syria to various acts of disobedience and sabotage, while the conservative regimes in Saudi Arabia and Jordan provided logistic support for the growing ranks of the Sunni fundamentalists.

These latter have probably, at some stages over the past three years, enjoyed at least the passive support of a majority of Syrians. Their hit-men were able to disappear without trace into the *souks* of most of the big, Sunni-dominated cities, even after daylight killings of official personages. As the regime struck back increasingly blindly, the attitude of the average Syrian, even the most devoted secularist, was often: 'Well, I am not with the fundamentalists, but I do not want to help the government catch them.' However, the fundamentalists, including the traditionally pro-Western Muslim Brotherhood, always failed to capitalise on their support by producing any concrete programme of action; last summer, intensive and often harsh government security sweeps cut back their networks considerably.

Now that a military confrontation with Israel is a real possibility, much of the previous passive support for the opposition can be turned back into support for the government. Few oppositionists would really prefer an Israeli victory to Mr Assad's continuation in power.

Mr Assad thus seems, by his 'steadfastness' in Lebanon, to be winning out at several different levels. Internally, he is shoring up his support in almost a mirror-image of Premier Begin's election tactics in Israel. But whereas Mr Begin's inflexibility is increasingly infuriating Israel's external constituency in Europe and elsewhere, Mr Assad has succeeded in radically strengthening, for the time being, Syria's ties with its Arab neighbours. The United Arab Emirates' Ambassador to London has warned that the Arab and Islamic oil-producing nations will not stand idly by if Israel attacks Syria; and though I doubt it is his fingers that are actually on the oil-taps, such warnings have some real weight behind them. The Syrian presence in Lebanon is sanctioned by an Arab League mandate, and the first direct Israeli threat to that presence was enough to force the Arab gulf states to reconsider previous plans to withdraw that mandate. As Israeli demands concerning 'freedom of the skies' over Lebanon grew wilder, so the other Arabs could not help but rally closer to Syria.

Mr Assad thus has some reason for, as latest reports from Damascus have it, 'exuding quiet self-confidence'. If the missile crisis escalates towards war, which it would still be foolish to rule out, then he may lose a portion of his army. But the Soviets and the other Arabs would not let him lose Damascus; and the Middle East log-jam he has been complaining of for years would finally be broken. If there is no war, but continued tension, then the other Arabs still cannot desert him. And if there is any serious peacemaking effort in Lebanon, then Syria and the Soviet Union would, for the first time since 1977, witness their roles in the Middle East receiving some recognition.

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THE MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT 17.2.81

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 1980 RESULTS

	1980 £m	1979 £m	1978 £m
Gross Revenue	**39.4**	36.9	31.1
Administration costs (net)	**4.7**	3.6	3.2
Gross operating surplus	**34.7**	33.3	27.9
Surplus before tax	**14.3**	12.1	10.3
Appropriated to General Reserve	**10.9**	5.7	6.6
Commitments at year end	**516.0**	449.0	379.0

Once again, net internal funds generated during the year provided the greater part of the Corporation's disbursements to new projects.

Commonwealth Development Corporation
33 Hill Street, London W1A 3AR

CDC's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 1980 is available from Government Bookshops and HMSO Government Publications Agents. Price £4.00.

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SOUTH AFRICA

Propaganda plot fails

MARTIN BAILEY exposes secret plan to buy British newspaper

SOUTH AFRICAN interests have been secretly involved in an attempt to purchase a British newspaper. The Christian League of Southern Africa — named a few weeks ago as a recipient of post-Muldergate funds — has backed negotiations to buy the weekly *Christian World*.

The Pretoria-based Christian League of Southern Africa (CLSA) was set up in 1974 to counter the World Council of Churches' campaign of support for the liberation struggle. Within a few years the South African Department of Information began channelling funds into the CLSA. Its activities rapidly expanded, and a London office was established in Westminster.

Former South African Information Secretary Dr Eschel Rhoodie revealed two years ago that his department had financed and 'taken charge' of the CLSA. The CLSA subsidy was known as Project G11-C — codenamed Project Bernard — and 320,000 Rands was budgeted for the 1979 financial year. The official Erasmus Commission report into the 'Muldergate' scandal also confirmed that the CLSA had been funded by the Department of Information.

Just before last month's general election in South Africa it was revealed that the Government had provided the CLSA with 340,000 Rands in the year ending April 1980. This was therefore one of the 'Muldergate' projects which continued even after the scandal had broken. The secret contract between the CLSA Chairman and the Division for Secret Projects at the Department of Information had specified that the Reverend Fred Shaw should travel to Britain to propagate the CLSA's ideals. Last month Foreign Minister Pik Botha admitted that his government had financed the CLSA to attack the World Council of Churches 'insofar as they were detrimental to good relationships in South Africa and good order'.

The Oxford-based *Christian World* was started in June 1978 as a weekly ecumenical paper. Its circulation reached 10,000, but it quickly developed serious financial problems. One year later, following an abortive appeal for £60,000, it ceased publication and the company which owned the paper went into voluntary liquidation. Michael Peak of King Loose & Co. of Oxford was appointed the liquidator, and he has since attempted to sell the newspaper. But although the actual price of buying the title would be small, it would cost at least £100,000 to run the paper properly for one year.

DISCUSSIONS to purchase *Christian World* were begun even before the newspaper ceased publication in June 1979. These initial negotiations were undertaken by London solicitors Norton, Rose, Botterell & Roche, on behalf of Graham Blainey, British representative of the CLSA. But it was in January 1980 that the main move was made. CLSA Chairman Reverend Fred Shaw flew into London for discussions, and on his return he acknowledged in a private letter to supporters that he had been 'privileged to share in the preparatory work for this publication, which when it is launched later on in the year, will make a tremendous impact upon the Christian world'.

Christian World was not, however, to be owned by the CLSA. As the Reverend Shaw explained, it would be 'put out by the International Christian Network'. The Network had originally been described in the CLSA newspaper *Encounter* as 'the UK section of the Pretoria-based CLSA' when it was launched in 1978. Reverend David Kingdon, the original Executive Secretary of the Network, has admitted that the CLSA was one of its two 'constituting bodies' and that the Network was 'virtually completely funded by the CLSA'.

Very close links were maintained between the CLSA and the Network (which is based in Abingdon). Reverend Shaw was the Network's Planning Secretary until late last year. Reverend John Mitchell, former Chairman of the CLSA Finance Committee in South Africa, is now the Network's Executive Secretary. He has confirmed that the Network was indeed 'involved' in the attempt to purchase the British church newspaper — but the Network 'established a separate committee to deal with the possibility of taking over *Christian World*'. The four members of this special committee were CLSA Chairman Reverend Shaw, the American representative of the CLSA, Network Chairman Professor Peter Beyerhaus, and London solicitor Graham Mather. The minutes of the Network's General Committee held in January 1980 confirm that 'plans for a well designed media programme were approved'.

THE PRESENT owners of *Christian World* have confirmed that Graham Mather did indeed approach them to purchase the newspaper with 'his associates'. Solicitors acting on behalf of Mather — Norton, Rose, Botterell & Roche — had concluded the broad terms of the agreement by early this year.

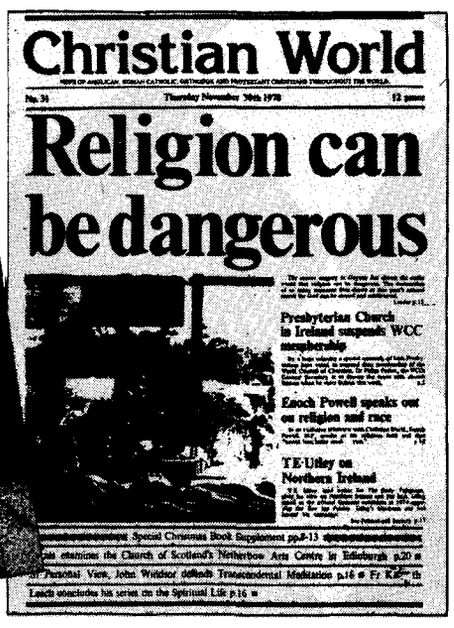
Michael Palmer, a director of the company which owns *Christian World,* admits that he knows very little about the people who were behind the consortium which was hoping to purchase the title. He had been told that their backers included the chairman of a bank and the rector of a City church. But the only two people who had been involved in the actual discussions were Graham Mather and Gervaise Duffield.

Graham Mather, a solicitor and legal expert at the Institute of Directors, told Palmer on a number of occasions that there was no South African involvement in the group which had been hoping to buy the newspaper. But the Executive Secretary of International Christian Network has said that Mather is indeed a member of the organisation and sits on the committee set up to deal with the purchase.

Gervaise Duffield, the other person present at the negotiations, visited South Africa in 1978 on a trip sponsored by Dr Rhoodie's Department of Information. He claims that he is not a member of the International Christian Network. But the organisation's newsletter announced in January that while the Executive Secretary is away on a trip to South Africa, 'Duffield will answer telephone queries'. On his return Executive Secretary Reverend Mitchell confirmed that Duffield was indeed a member. Duffield admits he is 'the informal advisor to the Network on publications', but says he knows nothing about the financial side of the venture, and that it is 'a City Gent arrangement'.

When the directors of *Christian World* recently learned about the growing evidence of South African money behind the consortium that was negotiating to purchase the newspaper, written assurances were sought that there was no South African involvement. Graham Mather did not provide these assurances, and the deal came to a sudden end just a few weeks ago. The owners of *Christian World* are now convinced that they had almost become the innocent victims of a secret South African attempt to launch a new propaganda venture in Europe. □

South African Reverend Shaw, who was thwarted in his attempt to buy Christian World for the Network.


Christian World
Religion can be dangerous
Presbyterian Church in Ireland suspends WCC membership
Enoch Powell speaks out on religion and race
TE Utley on Northern Ireland

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RACISM

NHS may rule out blacks

AMRIT WILSON unearths a new form of immigration control

THE DHSS is proposing new rules about who can and who can't use the Health Service. Is the intention to discriminate against black people? Last week Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for Social Services, speaking at St Stephen's Hospital, denounced such fears as 'utter rubbish'. Four days later, an Asian woman, Lulu Banu, came forward to tell how she had been harassed about her immigration status at that same St Stephen's Hospital. Jenkin immediately ordered an inquiry into the case. The implication was that this was an isolated incident and we British don't easily tolerate racial discrimination. But Lulu Banu's experience is no exception. Hospitals have for over a year been demanding passports from people they suspect may not be eligible for treatment. (Some like the London Hospital even have forms of their own demanding proof of permanent residence.) Cathy Fagg, Deputy House Governor at St Stephen's hospital, has explained that the grounds for suspicion are 'just a matter of common sense, whether we go on their being foreign or their colour or whatever'.

Lulu Banu's experience is only a reflection of the change that is going on not just in the Health Service but in the welfare services generally. It is a change being brought about by a web of confidential administrative circulars and obscure amendments to laws.* These directives not only deny welfare services to thousands of black people but establish a system of surveillance to implement this denial. And while Jenkin orders his inquiry into one case, the Nationality Bill (which having guillotined its way through Parliament has entered the House of Lords) establishes the legal and political principles which justify this system.

SECOND-CLASS citizenship is now no longer a rhetorical way of talking about racial discrimination. It is a literal description of people's experiences. If you are black you can't take your rights for granted. You are likely to face interrogation and possibly denial. Black people applying for National Insurance Numbers are being interviewed at Adelaide House by officials apparently from the DHSS who turn out to be immigration officers; black workers joining government-sponsored courses (the Manpower Services Commission machining course at Spitalfields, for example) are being told to bring their passports with them. Schools and colleges have been checking immigration status as a matter of course. Housing departments too have been pulled into action; some, like Hammersmith, are refusing to house people if they are on work permits or have any other restriction, however minor, on their passports.

Brent Community Health Council Report

Post-natal care: a 'drain on the state'?

The 'A' Code (the secret instructions issued to officials responsible for granting supplementary benefit) now has a section headed 'Liaison with the Home Office'. It begins by saying that 'the Supplementary Benefits Commission has agreed to notify the Home Office of claims for Supplementary Benefit by people whose admission to this country is subject to a time limit or some other form of control'. As claimants are not likely to volunteer such information this means that the DHSS sees it as its job to question every single black person as to their immigration status. The Home Office in turn 'may ask for the benefit position to be checked when a person's continued residence in this country is under review.'

As for the Social Security Act 1980, it could if necessary be used for large-scale deportations. The relevant sections of it are paras 17 and 25, schedule 2, part 2. Hidden in a huge Act they have missed public attention, but in conjunction with Para 42 of the Immigration Act 1971 they create a new criminal offence — the failure to maintain and accommodate dependants without recourse to public funds. For this, as for other criminal offences, people who are not 'patrials' can be deported. And if a 'Head of Household' is deported, then 'his' (the law is sexist, too) dependants can be deported as well. What exactly is meant by public funds is not clear. It would depend on how the law is interpreted by the courts. But anything from claiming benefit to using the Health Service could fall into this category.

It is in this context of threats and surveillance that the new Nationality Bill must be seen, because what it does is to formalise this hodgepodge of administrative denial into a legal concept, so that second-class citizenship becomes official. This is not merely an excess of Thatcherism but a product of mainstream British politics, in which Labour and Tory governments have both pursued racist immigration policies. According to the present government, the Nationality Bill is about clarifying the laws on citizenship. In fact, as *The Thin End of the White Wedge* (a handbook about the Nationality Law published by Manchester Law Centre) explains, the Bill is 'about the huge but logical leap from immigration control to the control of "immigrants" once here'. The handbook, which apparently stung Jenkin into his 'utter rubbish' speech at St Stephen's, points out that the very terminology of the Bill — British citizens, British Overseas citizens, Citizens of British Dependent Territories — legitimises the idea of different categories of citizenship with different welfare entitlements. Also, its emphasis on defining people in terms of 'how much they throw in their lot' with the UK opens the way to withholding benefit from those who are not deemed to 'throw in their lot'. According to the Bill:

> British Citizenship will make available a ready definition by which . . . duties and entitlements may be redefined in the future. It would not necessarily follow that these would always be attached to the holding of British Citizenship.

This suggests that even the new category of full British Citizenship would not guarantee full benefits for black people.

THE BILL will almost certainly become law by the autumn but it is unlikely to be implemented for several months after that. Between now and its implementation a variety of other laws and regulations will be amended — including the proposed new regulations on use of the Health Service. Those to be denied treatment will include most workers from Third World countries (Europeans, East and West, will be okay), overseas students, and that broad category of people ambiguously labelled 'not ordinarily resident' in Britain. For purposes of entry to Britain the term 'not ordinarily resident' is already familiar. Incredibly, it includes such people as Shukar Mohammed of Oldham who has lived in Britain for more than 20 years, whose friends and family are here, but who happens to have made long visits to Pakistan in the last few years.

The new Health regulations will serve another purpose too — that of increasing racism and suspicion of black people. In order to deny some people treatment, Health Service staff will have the authority to question everyone not obviously European, and to get them to prove that they have been here more than three years. Effectively, hospital clerical staff will operate as part-time immigration officers.

How can the NHS, that 'fruit of working class victory', so easily be turned into an instrument of surveillance against the black working class? *Black People and the Health*

*E.g. DHSS Memo on use of the NHS by people from abroad 1974; DES circular 8/77, Aug 1977 on Higher fees and quotas for overseas students; Rule 21, Revised Immigration Rules 1980 — Children not admitted permanently must attend private schools; Section 25, Part 3 Finance Act (no 2) 1980 — abolishing child allowances for children overseas, etc.

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Service, a pamphlet produced by Brent Community Health Council, points out that the experiences of black people provide an insight into the nature of the welfare state: it argues that the policies of the NHS 'have been shaped by and have themselves had a role in shaping state attitudes to immigration, to black workers and to racism'. The NHS, it says, has consistently ignored the main causes of ill-health for black people — dangerous working conditions and rotten housing. Instead it has ascribed ill health to the pernicious effects of black culture and black inherited disease. Even perinatal mortality, which is well known to be linked with working and living conditions, is seen by the Head of the Ethnic Minorities Department of the DHSS as 'caused by late seeking of ante-natal care, taking of dangerous drugs, lead or antimony-based Asian medicines, imported diseases — a mother with a diseased pelvis for example — and a high incidence of inherited characteristics.' The implication is that black people both cause disease and are a burden on the state.

In addition, as the Brent document shows, the medical services have for years cooperated with the police and immigration officers in harassing black people. As early as 1966 the British Medical Association was campaigning for the screening and exclusion of immigrants on health grounds. Between 1956 and 1971 their representative body passed no less than 21 resolutions on the subject. Partly as a result of these campaigns, Asian women were subjected to vaginal examinations not just when the scandal broke in 1979 but for the ten years before that. Wrist X-rays, sanctioned by the BMA, are still used to ascertain the age of children coming in as dependants (though there is no medical consensus on the validity of the method). There is also a paranoid fear of Asian tuberculosis, though there is no evidence to justify this fear. All incoming dependants are given a chest X-ray. And abnormality in this tends to be ascribed to infectious TB and can lead to deportation. A doctor described the procedures used:

> Everyone except pregnant women and children are subjected to X-rays at Terminal 3. Those who have right of entry and have an abnormal chest X-ray . . . are taken in Securicor vans to one of various hospitals including Northwick Park and St Johns. The patients are kept in total isolation. There are no interpreters, only one person can be in a room with them at any one time. Some people think they are in prison.

Usually the people being examined are symptomatically fit. Evidence is sought which might *suggest* they have a disease. In the case of TB, microbiological tests take eight weeks to give results, so doctors end up using their clinical judgment.

The same doctor explained in the pamphlet that 'because TB is relatively common in the Indian sub-continent, doctors tend to ascribe any respiratory trouble in a young Asian to TB . . . So really decisions made on a subjective basis are causing deportations.'

At ports of entry to Britain, sons and daughters of black workers settled here are already being turned away if they are suspected of needing NHS treatment; in the future whole families may be deported if their children require the services of the welfare state. □

Diary

MORTENSON GREEN

Warsaw

■ The main character in Andrzej Wajda's film *Rough Treatment*, made in 1978, is a free-thinking journalist who survives wars and revolution around the planet then returns to Poland where his career is arbitrarily broken. He is finally blown up by a faulty gas water heater.

People in Poland today like their messages delivered direct, but the odd symbol is irresistible. Spring arrived in Warsaw along with thousands of peasants gathered under the green banner of rural solidarity. Placard icons invoked the Virgin and political demands as loudspeakers outside the Supreme Court broadcast the session which formally recognised the right of the peasants to an independent union. The peasant leader, a lad of 23, spoke defiantly of the new pride and militancy of those once despised and exploited. Now they would lead themselves and ask no one's permission to strike. After all, he said, Lenin asked no one's permission to start the revolution. Then he kissed the cross.

The mood was cheery, songs were sung, the court proceedings boomed along to everyone's satisfaction, then suddenly the platform party narrowly missed being spliced by panes of falling glass. Only 35 years of 'democratic centralism' could construct buildings whose windows spontaneously pop out on to the people below.

■ A young priest, one of the founding spirits of Rural Solidarity, jumped up regularly to sing hymns and lead prayers but the crowd seemed almost impiously relaxed about the whole business. An outsider can only speculate as to how much of Polish religiosity is in fact displaced nationalism pushed up the aisle to the altar by Russian imperialism (half the three million party members are said to be believers); certainly when the priest called for a peasant revolt against liberal abortion laws, he scarcely got a clap.

■ Poles are, understandably, selfishly concerned over any external event which might provoke Brezhnev to kick over the table on which a finely judged game of political poker is being played. Mitterrand's victory worried them almost as much as the Christian Democrats' win in Berlin. In such a week, the shooting of the Pope induced fear as well as grief, for this heaven-touched politician might yet help mediate their survival.

The churches filled rapidly the night of the shooting. The holiest object in Poland is a swarthy icon called the Black Virgin which periodically leaves its home in Czestachova to progress around the country. That night it was in the Old Town and I went to see it. Unsure of the ritual, I simply sat and looked as prayers were interrupted by regular bulletins from the pulpit. It was very moving. Then a priest appeared, yanked the Virgin aside, and began hammering nails noisily into her supporting frame. Before I had fully recovered from this casual Catholicism, a western TV crew came swaying towards me like a centipede on expenses. Lights, camera, and in the mirror of my mind I could see the shot: foreground, pensive well-dressed fellow too numbed to pray stares at Virgin for solace, while behind archetypal old ladies sing responses. So the grieving face of Poland which satellites may have bounced around the world was actually a puzzled Prod at last getting some sense of the appeal of the Scarlet Woman of Rome.

Warsaw must have more hookers per square metre of hotel foyer than any other European capital, but when I got back from prayers all the girls had gone. 'Mark of respect for the Holy Father,' said reception. A religion of easy virtue indeed.

■ Public order is now being exploited by the old guard as the muddle last weekend showed when a charge that Russian soldiers were being 'assaulted' had to be amended to 'insulted'. For Solidarity it is a very sensitive issue. A firebrigade (headed by KOR intellectuals) was sent to cool the mob who burned down a police station where, it was alleged, the militia had a racket selling vodka. One of Solidarity's demands is honest information about the extent of alcoholism. At Lodz recently drunken football fans ran wild, smashed coaches, and a 14 year old boy lost a leg after being thrown from a train. This despite the efforts of Solidarity vigilantes. However, figures released about Poland's prisons show that anti-social behaviour pre-dates Solidarity. Having released 14,000 people in the last year, there are still 92,000 people in prison. With a population of 20 million less than ours, that's still more than twice the number in British jails.

Roger Woddis

Horrorscope

A clairvoyant claims to have foreseen a 7-point plan for Mrs Thatcher.

Oh, fortune-teller, tell me all
That glimmers in your crystal-ball:
What warning do the signs forbode
Of further trouble down the road?
Do you detect a shining plain,
Or months of everlasting rain?
Should I, though rating him the most,
Give Keith a less demanding post?

Nothing, whichever way I look,
Has gone according to the book,
Though God Almighty knows I've tried
To foster national suicide.
I've played it hard, I've played it fast,
But all my future's in the past.
And now, when faith is running low,
I've got that bloody Group from Bow.

Please tell me your master-plan
To save me going down the pan.
Do you see hope for my career?
Will I still be around next year?
Between the gatepost, me and you,
I don't know what the hell to do:
Tell me I'm mad and cannot win —
But not, please *not*, to pack it in.

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■ Last Monday's student march to Victory Square demanding the release of political prisoners, though curtailed, passed without incident to the great relief of the Solidarity leadership who gave it belated support. On 9 May, in the same square, the army held its annual parade to celebrate the defeat of the Nazis. As the last soldiers marched off, what followed was startling even by recent Polish standards. A large group of young people marched in, unfurled a peace flag, and held a short meeting at the tomb of the unknown soldier. Then two lines formed, clenched fists were raised, and the demonstrators disappeared as mysteriously as they came.

■ The decision to send Wajda's new film *Man of Iron* to Cannes is heartening. Two weeks ago the Ministry of Culture was still demanding 28 cuts in the finished print. What, if anything, Wajda conceded I don't yet know, but his integrity assures him a popular esteem unmatched by any artist or intellectual in the West. His achievement over 30 years undoubtedly afforded protection to the new generation of film-makers who, in recent years, made the boldest public critique of Polish society. Films previously banned now play to huge audiences, but there still remains a disciplined circumspection. A stark documentary about the events in Gdansk last August has not yet been 'officially' released. Instead, cinemas announce a 'special screening'. Nearly eight million people have seen it — a box office record.

■ Wajda called a press conference this month to announce the results of a democratic ballot by film-makers to elect the heads of the industry's eight major production units. These jobs are still in the gift of the Ministry but the ballot had the backing of Party members in the industry. The 'artistic directors' rejected by their colleagues included right-wing nationalists.

Anonymous letters are now circulating claiming 'Jews and multi-millionaires' are behind the democratic putsch. The film-makers fear the hand of the secret police. They also fear reactionaries still in power will take revenge on the industry for its political role. Already they are short of stock, chemicals, and even petrol for crew cars. Last year's output of 35 features may be reduced to single figures. Yet the rebirth of the Polish film could quickly be converted to hard currency through co-productions with the West and international sales of films like *Man of Iron*. The Cannes decision is, at least, a positive sign. If it plays in Britain, see it, and help save a brave industry.

This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcard, please.)

A 38-year-old fish frier has won official recognition to be known as Kermit the Frog — star of the TV series *The Muppets* — and council officials in Doncaster now address bills and rate demands to the frog. — *Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor)

Mrs Irene Rumney, who had faced a week in jail unless she revealed the whereabouts of the family dog, Gipsy, after 'custody' was granted to her estranged husband, has complied with the order. — *Guardian* (R.K. Turner)

This and that

Arthur Marshall

CAN ANYBODY explain to me, though please don't let the problem be a bother, why, although one can relatively easily remember quite lengthy telephone numbers belonging to friends and firms and shops and which in many cases require nine numbers, it is totally impossible to recall, even if known, anybody's postal code, postal codes demanding a combination of, at the most, only six letters and figures. Confess now! If your life depended on it, could you manage even one postal code?

I have mentioned before the depressing idiocy of our small Devon village of Appleton having over thirty different postal codes and of one man, in a house with two front doors, being blessed with a postal code for each door. I haven't, I am happy to say, the faintest idea of what my own is, having not the slightest intention of using it or of asking my friends to do so. I would not be so uncooperative if the Post Office had behaved itself with the public but it has not. By now it has, I say again, succeeded in making it virtually impossible for a poor person to post a parcel, send a telegram or write many letters, such a comfort to the elderly. What happened, may I ask, to the Sunday post (they promised to 'consider' its reinstitution)? What about the cheaper rate for post-cards? Meantime the expensive and vomit-making Buzby continues to flaunt himself defiantly from hoardings and the box and there is even a Buzby Club (with coloured mag and 'funny antics of Buzby'). Have the PO officials any idea at all of the extent to which they are despised?

But it is of course in my saintly nature always to wish to be helpful and I therefore advise Sir William Whatever-it-now-is to copy our clever American cousins whose postal codes are entirely in figures and have therefore a chance of being remembered, though perhaps not always by the older ones among us. How odd that, although one's visual memory for faces remains as sharp as ever and one is always ready with a cheery 'Hullo there!' and 'Long time no see!', it is the names that completely disappear. Only the other day I was struggling to remember the name of that bright and London-based young man of the Twenties who, in order to be able, later in the evening, to fill the house with his raffish friends, used at dinner to slip a powerful sleeping-draught into his parents' soup so that they left the table already in a somewhat bemused state and decided to make ('Why don't we toddle on up, my dear?') an unusually early bed, sleeping soundly through the subsequent telephonings, slamming of taxi doors, shaking of cocktails ('Who's for another White Lady?'), and the HMV portable grinding out 'I Love My Chili-Bom-Bom'. It was about this post-war time that many parents began on the *Via Dolorosa* of sufferings resulting from their children's behaviour, sufferings quite unknown to the Victorians and Edwardians and which have increased in potency year by year with the *via* becoming ever stonier and more uphill. It was in the Twenties that, a minor irritation though it may have been, fathers and mothers of smart and go-ahead teenage children found themselves being addressed ('Morning, Archie. Morning, Hilda.') by their christian names, and huffy silences produced further impertinences ('Do stop sulking, Maud').

Although I too became in the Twenties teenage, I was very far from being either smart or go-ahead and the idea of calling my father ('Morning, Bertie.') by his christian name would have been unimaginable to both of us. Even to write the word, after all this time and with him forty years dead, gives me a feeling of irreverence and guilt. But then my father was strong on arousing guilt in others, often followed by resentment, and I was an awkward and inadequate son. He would have liked me to work hard at Cambridge, which thank goodness I didn't, and although, to please him, I did become a schoolmaster of sorts, he would have wished me to be a headmaster somewhere, with a love of Dickens and a jolly wife and family of girls (he didn't much care for boys). But apart from, eventually, Dickens, I achieved none of these things.

My prep school friend, Williamson, who went to a different public school but with whom I kept in touch and visited during the school hols, had a regal way with everybody, his agreeable parents included. To him they were, and from quite an early age, 'Percy' and 'Enid' or, if referred to collectively, 'the Williamsons'. If he felt that he and I were reminiscing too much in their presence about life at Stirling Court (we were obsessed with the question as to whether or not the headmaster's wife, Mrs Macdonald, wore a wig and the evidence for and against), he would say, as though they weren't there or were deaf, 'I am afraid the Williamsons are feeling a little bit out of it. We'd better try to drag them into the conversation.' We went constantly to the cinema, sometimes with Percy and Enid, sometimes alone. On the latter occasions he would make all clear. 'We're leaving the Williamsons at home for this one,' he would say to them. 'It's a German film, *Metropolis*, and rather beyond your intellectual range, Enid, so you and Percy can have a quiet little evening *à deux*. Don't get into mischief.' When first I heard this kind of jolly chat going on, I assumed that sooner or later one or other of his parents would give Williamson a box on the ear, but no. He was never either rude or offensive and they were enormously diverted by this chummy approach.

The Williamsons lived not far from Stirling Court and one summer's day Williamson and I paid a return visit. Mrs Macdonald, firmly hatted, gave us tea. Various masters greeted us and looked either jovial or shifty, according to their past histories. The whole place seemed to have shrunk in size and the dusty yard in which we had kicked about and hit each other looked dustier yet. Our spirits drooped a little and we wondered, ungratefully perhaps and not for the first time, why our parents, out of the hundreds of schools then available, had chosen that particular one.

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LETTERS

Freedom & the Czechs

I have been following with interest the letters in your columns which have commented upon my exchange with the Czech oppositionist, Vaclav Racek (*NS* 24 April). Not all your correspondents were complimentary, but I think it important that this discussion goes on.

Meanwhile I think it even more important to write, in the very strongest terms, expressing my dismay at the irresponsible and stupid harassment, interrogation and detention, of members of Charter 77 in the last two weeks in Czechslovakia. While full details of these current events are not yet available, and while one may hope that the rumours that a show trial is impending will prove to be untrue, it is necessary to say once again that this kind of treatment of persons concerned with civil and intellectual liberties is a direct action against the cause of European peaceful unity, raises tension between both blocs, makes communication between individual citizens about all questions (including the questions of common strategies to preserve the peace of our continent) more difficult. Whatever threatens the liberties of European citizens also brings into danger the cause of peace.

E. P. Thompson, Wick Episcopi, Upper Wick, Worcester

Workers' co-ops

While Peter Slowe's letter on worker coops (*NS* 1 May) must go on the debit side when weighing up the value of the Cooperative Development Agency, the general assault on the CDA does seem a pity.

It isn't as if the worker coop movement is so strong that we can afford this in-fighting and it was heartening to see Alan Taylor (Letters 15 May) take a more sympathetic line over criticism of the Labour Party's recent cooperative proposals — which managed to exclude almost all of the funding features which distinguish successful small businesses. Much as we want worker cooperatives to be distinctive, the notion of public funds being virtually the sole source of capital does seem unhelpfully limiting.

I have come to the conclusion that the best way to promote worker cooperatives is through a variety of bottom-up initiatives from local authorities, local CDAs and community initiatives — including those from Trades Councils and from local unionists and their officials. Given the threat to national trade unions and their fixation with corporatist issues, the chance of a top-down impetus, even if we had a reformist Conservative government, must be remote.

You could see the three years of the CDA's existence as a clearing of the air for a new wave of cooperative activity within the Labour movement. The traditional cooperative movement has got over its ruffled feelings about worker cooperatives; the trade union movement is more receptive to pragmatic local initiatives; there is some support for cooperatives on all sides of the House of Commons, and the Cooperative Development Agency has built up a valuable series of experiences.

A reformed CDA could become a dynamic help to the worker cooperative movement and I would hope that cooperative activists would support its refinancing and help it to expand its role as a significant source of expertise.

Prof. Anthony Eccles, London Business School, Sussex Place, Regent's Park, NW1

Sloppy lecturer

From Prof. John Honey

If your reviewer Peter Kellner (*NS* 8 May) is to lecture authors on 'sloppy language', he must be surer of his ground.

Decimate no longer means, to most of its users, to cull by ten per cent, but is now taken by the consensus of educated usage to mean 'to destroy or kill a large proportion of', as any good modern dictionary (e.g. Collins 1979) will show. Because of my classical education I am uncomfortable about this, but it does not force me into the etymological fallacy to which Mr Kellner appears to subscribe, though even here I doubt if he would insist on restricting words like *terrible, presently* or *manufacture* to the uses prescribed by their etymology. *Literally* is fast adapting to the function of an intensifier, and however undesirable we may think it, it will require more than the *ex cathedra* proclamations of Mr Kellner to stem the tide.

School of Education, Leicester Polytechnic, Scraptoft, Leicester

Low pay and family poverty

Doug Grieve (*NS* 8 May) attacks the 'family wage' concept as a means of dealing with family poverty. He is right to do so. But the case against the family wage model is even more damning than he implies.

The central problem with the family wage model is that it confuses a strategy for fighting *family poverty* with a strategy for fighting *low pay* — and it renders them both ineffective.

Low pay is now predominantly a problem among women workers. 74% of full-time manual women (2.7 million in total) compared to 26% of men (2.0 million), had weekly earnings excluding overtime below £75 in April 1980. In addition there were 2.5 million women part-timers earning less than the equivalent hourly rate of £1.90.

Yet implicit in the family wage model are several far-reaching assumptions, which unions representing low-paid women workers and committed to equal rights and pay should be *challenging* rather than *perpetuating:*

- that a male worker should support the absence of a female partner from the labour force, through his own wage.
- that anything which a married woman earns is 'pin money'. The family wage model downgrades women's contribution to household income and their right to an independent income of their own.
- that household income is shared *equally within the family and that,* provided the adult male is sufficiently rewarded, every family member has an adequate standard of living. In fact one in five separated wives is actually better off on supplementary benefit than when married and dependent on her husband's income.

A pay target which was no longer *tied to concepts of family need* would make possible a radical re-assessment of our strategy on *low pay*. It would point us towards the development of a programme within which a strong collective bargaining system was working with, and not against, policies for the equality of women — and in which the issues of low pay and inequality are no longer treated separately or apolitically. We could no longer hide from the key issue of wage differentials (for example) — behind the illusory 'objectivity' of a subsistence definition of low pay.

Secondly, it would make possible a coherent approach to the issues raised by the problems of *family poverty*. The argument that the State should adapt incomes to family needs through the social wage (including both services and cash benefits) is *not* an argument about whether the State or employer should bear the cost. Any increase in payments by the State would in practice be financed out of the social surplus. The real question is *how* the surplus should be distributed to take account of variations in need — through a system of taxation and social benefits, or somehow through the wage form itself. Since the subordination of female labour contributes to family poverty, we may find that we place more emphasis on issues such as flexibility in working hours and greater child-care provision.

Such considerations would widen, rather than reduce, the trade union movement's collective bargaining role.

Fran Bennett, Ken Jones, Sue Ward, Claygate, Surrey

Jean Rhys

We are planning the publication of a collection of letters by the late Jean Rhys, to be edited by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly, and would be grateful to anyone in possession of letters from her if they would write to Francis Wyndham c/o this address.

Diana Athill, André Deutsch Ltd, 105 Great Russell Street, WC1

Lynch mob or apartheid

R.W. Johnson devotes most of his review of four books about South Africa (*NS* 24 April) to an account of G.M. Fredrickson's comparative study of racism in America and South Africa. He says: 'On every count the early South Africans were as tolerantly pluralist as the Americans were murderously racist'. But the 'early South Africans' used to indulge in the sports of 'Bushman-hunting' and 'Hottentot-hunting' which led to the near extinction of both groups of ancient indigenous peoples.

Johnson concludes his account by saying: 'Lynching, so common in the US, was unheard of in South Africa; instead the full power of the State was imposed on blacks'. Anyone with any practical experience of South Africa's rural life knows that far from being 'unheard of' in South Africa, lynching is so common and casual as to hardly merit a mention in their press: witness the Bethal farm labour scandals of the 1950s and similar cases today. But even if Johnson was right, what point is he trying to make? That white South Africans are essentially very nice? Well, yes, many of them are!

Johnson goes on to seriously misrepresent one of the books he is supposed to be reviewing. Of Eli Weinberg's *Portrait of a People,* which is subtitled 'A personal photographic record of the South African liberation struggle' he says: 'the photographs are really all there is to this book'. Precisely! He goes on to say: 'It is, by the way, something of a political feat to compile a collection such as this and pretend that such organisations as the PAC, Black Consciousness and white liberals never existed'. If he had read the 'fairly standard party-line text', as he calls it, even as far as the second sentence of the introduction, he would have seen that the photographs cover 'Key issues and events which occurred between the mid-forties and the early sixties'. The time period ends, therefore, ten years before any of the 'Black Consciousness' organisations were founded. In fact the photographs end substantively in 1960, by which time the PAC had been in existence for less than a year.

Johnson says of some 'white liberals' later in his article, in relation to another review book, that 'few of them seem to think; they merely opine. The book is full of their mock-heroics . . .' A suitable subject perhaps for a mock-reviewer like Johnson, whose silliness extends to saying in one breath of Eli Weinberg's photographs that 'Some are marvellous and many are both historic and rare . . .' and in the next to sneering about 'Eli Weinberg's party clap-trap'.

This is the kind of comment the South African government would make about the book; it was their 'reason' for imprisoning Eli Weinberg and for banning him, and for banning all books published by the International Defence and Aid Fund.

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Closed shop, closed minds

Camera Press

Closed world: after the war Keynes (above) had to negotiate with himself to retrieve the Royal Opera House from its use as a dance-hall (below).

Fox Photos

In 1978 the Arts Council commissioned **Jim McGuigan**, a sociologist, to study the system of grants to writers. His report is published this week, nearly two years after its completion. But it may be too late: grants to writers have already been abandoned. Here, Jim McGuigan looks at the history of the Arts Council's confused attitude to literature and the arts in general.

AT THE BEGINNING of April the Arts Council announced that its grants to writers, after 15 years of existence, and its National Book awards, after a shorter but even more turbulent period, were to be abandoned. They would be replaced by just five bursaries of up to £7,500 each for established writers of high literary merit. This sudden decision infuriated writers' interest groups, particularly the Writers' Guild. Attack and counter-attack followed.

To many, this fuss over assistance to writers must look like a storm in a teacup. A wider view reveals that the saucers and plates are cracked as well, and the whole tea-party is perched precariously on a rickety table. Subsidy to literature has always been a minor branch of Arts Council operations, involving only about 1 per cent of expenditure on the arts in England. To understand why the Arts Council's intervention in the literary world is so limited it is necessary to examine the traditional aims of the Council as a whole, and the particularly narrow aims of the literature department.

The Arts Council is the product of cultural Keynesianism. During the Second World War John Maynard Keynes, chief economic adviser at the Treasury, became involved with the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), which had been set up in 1939 with funds donated by an American millionaire to provide cultural solace for a beleagured British population. In 1942 the Treasury took full responsibility for financing CEMA. As a result of Keynes's vision and ability to negotiate at the higher echelons of the national power structure CEMA was transformed from a temporary expedient to a permanent apparatus for public subsidy of the arts. In 1945 Keynes persuaded the government to provide money for the Arts Council.

Keynes advocated the subsidising of institutions — such as theatres — rather than individuals. He hoped that high cultural organisations, after the initial injection of money, would become self-supporting. This has not actually happened, of course, but a trace of such an expectation remains in Arts Council policy today.

The Keynesian legacy is exemplified by the way in which he set about retrieving the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden from its war-time function as a Mecca dance hall. As chairman of the Covent Garden Trust, Keynes secured a Treasury grant to renovate the auditorium for the reopening of the nation's leading opera house. In her book *The Nationalisation of Culture,* Janet Minihan observes:

> Keynes, in his capacity both as chairman of the Covent Garden Opera Trust and of the Arts Council, must have enjoyed negotiating with himself over the arrangements, which represented the first step in the Council's largest commitment of funds to a single enterprise.

Literature was virtually neglected because it is not organisation-based in the same way as the performing arts. Moreover, in the post-war world the publishing industry was comparatively buoyant, and the state's responsibility for literature was concentrated in the most highly developed public library system in the world. In addition, the central place of literature in schools and universities appeared to ensure the safe reproduction of a discriminating readership. Nevertheless, the Arts Council did provide limited support for poetry readings and festivals, which were consistent with its general emphasis on performance.

It was not until the mid-Sixties that assistance to literary production came into being. In response to Richard Findlater's pamphlets on the low earnings of writers and to Jenny Lee's White Paper *A Policy For The Arts*, which stressed the needs of individual artists and writers, the literature department and panel were set up in 1966 with the chief aim — albeit a modestly-financed one — of distributing grants to writers.

These grants could hardly be described as part of an overall strategy, since there was no such strategy. This was pointed out immediately by the *Times Literary Supplement*, which complained about the lack of support for *distribution* of literature.

IN THE mid-Sixties, then, two camps were clearly being formed. The literature panel had accepted Findlater's view that the main problem was authors' poverty. (This was based on the unproven assumption that the financial circumstances of writers were worsening. It is just as likely that the true difficulty lay in the declining status of 'serious' writing.) The *TLS* believed that, by concentrating on authors' incomes, the panel was at best attacking an effect rather than a cause of the decline in literary success. The *TLS* suggested that the problem might be approached from the opposite end by stimulating literary interest in 'the provinces'.

At first the Arts Council rejected this 'infrastructural' definition of the problem, but as the crisis deepened during the Seventies schemes were developed for assisting in the circulation of literature, most notably, in recent years, through subsidising community bookshops. This coincided with a decreasing emphasis on grants to writers,

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culminating this year in the abolition of the scheme.

Now, as before, attitudes to the problem are polarised. But the Arts Council and its critics have apparently swapped positions. The literature director, Charles Osborne, says that the Arts Council is primarily concerned with the *distribution* of 'serious' writing and not with the livelihood of authors. Critics, including writers, say that grants for authors should not have been abandoned.

This is, of course, a false polarisation. Writers are not opposed to support for publishing and distribution. However, the debate inevitably assumes this form because the Arts Council's budget for literature is so small. Two positions which should be complementary have perforce become mutually exclusive.

At a deeper level the issue must turn on the narrowness, both financially and culturally, of the Arts Council's literature policy. The possibility now being tabled, for Arts Council funding of a state publishing house, may be the most significant departure yet. It would be expensive, but more significantly it raises the question of the Arts Council's relation to literary culture as a whole. What kind of books would be published with state money?

REPLYING TO Charles Osborne's recent declaration on literature policy, Blake Morrison posed the following question in the *TLS* of 10 April:

> What is not clear yet is whether the decision to abandon the 'Grants to Writers' scheme was influenced by a report by Jim McGuigan, *Writers and the Arts Council*, so far unpublished but certain to arouse strong feeling when it appears.

The short answer is no: in my view grants to writers should have been reformed and expanded, not abandoned. But the long answer is slightly more complex.

Grants to writers were not an unqualified success because, in the literary field, the Arts Council at present operates a social and cultural closed shop. The clearest evidence of this lies in the way grants were actually distributed to writers, and in the Council's concept of 'serious' literature.

Grant recipients were, in the main, well-educated middle-class southerners. This is not necessarily a conscious bias, since it merely reproduces the structure of the literary profession in England. However, there is an important *social* difference between grant recipients and unsuccessful applicants. Generally, unsuccessful applicants were young, less well established and poorer. As one of them said: 'If they're giving grants to people who have professional or above-professional incomes then that's just swindling other people out of money.' There are plenty of examples of exactly this.

Formally, the Arts Council had two criteria for awarding grants: literary merit and financial need. In practice the former far outweighed the latter. The Council aimed to support 'serious' writers of proven literary merit almost regardless of their incomes. To give an example of the kind of answer to the the income question on the application form which was acceptable in 1979: 'His principal source of income is visiting professoring in the US. The less he needs to do this, the better for his book.' This applicant — Stephen Spender — was duly awarded a maximum grant to write his autobiography. At the finance committee meeting at which the decision was made, some disquiet was voiced about the known wealth of the applicant. However, his literary merit seemed beyond question, so it was taken for granted that he should be supported.

At the previous finance committee meeting the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, representing 300 non-professional writers, were refused a grant of £7,000 to employ a national organiser because, in the words of Charles Osborne:

> The kind of writing which they were encouraging into publication didn't really, for the most part, justify itself on literary grounds . . . One could see it was useful from a therapeutic view, perhaps, and maybe in general social terms, community terms, for people whose writing talents might be quite modest to be encouraged to write if it was of use them.

To their credit, the FWWCP persisted with the application for support for writing which they insist is 'serious', but not high culture in the Arts Council's terms. Earlier this year the Council finally awarded them a grant. On the surface, this looks like an incredible turnabout. But it seems just as likely that it is the Arts Council seeking a quiet life. The resilience of elitism is exemplified by its ability to make minor concessions.

The closed system which dominates the Arts Council's literature policy is attributable to the deep interconnections between the Council and the metropolitan literary establishment. The superficial label of 'mafia' is often applied to the literary establishment and the panel but it is inappropriate, since the Cosa Nostra is not usually associated with incest. At the Arts Council, roles are switched with considerable ease.

Between 1976 and 1978 six members of the literature panel, including the chairman, were sponsors of grant applications either before or during their period of service. In the financial year 1976-77 four current panel members successfully sponsored writers for grants. Two of the panel member/sponsors were publishers who applied for assistance for books in progress which they subsequently published. The integrity of these sponsors is not at stake, since there is no evidence to indicate direct influence on the decision to award grants. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to infer that writers able to request sponsorship from panel members, or from other leading members of the literary establishment, were well-placed. The whole system of sponsorship of applicants ensures the exclusion of anyone who doesn't produce 'serious' literature according to the establishment's conventions.

Pressure has recently been put on the Arts Council to reconsider the decision to abolish grants to writers. This may succeed. Some of my recommendations, such as greater attention to actual need and even a scheme for new writers, might now be considered. Improvements could occur, but so long as the Arts Council retains its present oligarchic structure the prospects for writers, literature and the arts in general are bleak.

Writers and the Arts Council is published by Arts Council Publications at £2.50.

FICTION

Brian Martin

The wild bunch

The Golden Veil by PADDY KITCHEN *Hamish Hamilton* £7.95
Penny Links by URSULA HOLDEN *Eyre Methuen* £5.50
Original Sins by LISA ALTHER *Women's Press* £6.95
Beloved Latitudes by DAVID POWNALL *Gollancz* £6.95

'Guggums', or 'the Sid', must be turning in her grave: after all there is room now after Dante Rossetti's exhumation of her and the removal of his poems from her coffin. Elizabeth Siddall died tragically in 1862 from the long-term effects of taking laudanum, the Victorian panacea, which Ruskin's friend Acland had warned her against. Paddy Kitchen tells the sad story of this admired Pre-Raphaelite beauty who inspired many of the PRB; 'our paintings depend on real beauty. Not shoddy make-believe'.

In *The Golden Veil,* the gang's all there: Walter Deverell, Millais, Hunt, F.M.Brown, Thomas Woolner, the Rossettis. 'The Sid', released from her mother's sentence to the millinery trade, sits as model for Deverell, for Millais (as Ophelia, lying in a tub of water for him hour after hour) and for Rossetti himself. At the very end Rossetti comforts her, 'You are still the supreme inspiration of my work'.

Paddy Kitchen is good at making an historical shift in time, and summoning up the details of Victorian life. The seamier parts of London are convincingly recreated. The riverside scenes of Walworth and Bermondsey, and her description of the hanging of a murderer as a public spectacle, are neatly drawn.

The shadow of the macabre hangs over this novel. Lizzy's affair with Walter Deverell is a romantic tragedy, her liaison with Rossetti a romantic agony. Paddy Kitchen is more than a little kind to the Rossettis since William was dull, Christina was an 'extremely shy prude' as Roy Fuller has it, and Dante was selfish. He was the leader of a wild bunch. He two-timed with Annie Miller among others, had fallen in love with William Morris's Jane Burden at the time he married Lizzy, and himself became addicted to chloral and laudanum. His life-style at the Cheyne Walk colony which he set up after Lizzy's death drove George Meredith out: after all, there was the drunk Swinburne sliding naked down the bannisters, and a menagerie which included not only humans but a kangaroo and a wombat. Rossetti was an unpleasant rogue and Lizzy suffered because of him. Even so the novelist must be allowed her fiction. Ruskin was a nicer piece of work and is memorably portrayed: he looked at Lizzy, 'bending over to greet her rather like a heron peering down into a pool'.

There is a haunting quality about this novel and it impresses because of the tangle of unsatisfactory relationships: yet the ghosts of the PRB mob must surely be laughing up their ethereal sleeves at much of

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the characterisation in *The Golden Veil.*

WHILE *The Golden Veil* is about art, *Penny Links* is a work of art. Spare and elegant, Ursula Holden's novel is largely dialogue: the characters speak for themselves. It has an admirably simple but ingenious plot. An ageing former rector, 'Holy G' Mortiss, dies within ear-shot of church-bells. Various relations have expectations: his daughter who looks after him during two years of decline, his second wife Coral, or rather Coraline as she prefers, and Arthur his weakling, asthmatic, bed-wetting nephew. His housekeeper, Ma Chat, might benefit too. She fiddles the grocer's list because nobody checks, and enters on it items such as 'tinned ferrets' out of sheer devilry to see if anyone notices, and fills her homeward bag with victuals from the Mortiss larder. Ursula Holden is an acute observer of human nature and its foibles. Her characters speak with an irony and understatement reminiscent of Muriel Spark, and in *Penny Links* she gives us a beautifully-written little masterpiece.

If *Penny Links* is the short of the novel form, *Original Sins* is the long of it. It belongs to the mammoth tradition of the American novel. Devotees of Lisa Alther's *Kinflicks* will find more of the same in *Original Sins* but, as it turns out, less originality. There is an easily detectable reliance on the old gag.

No doubt the sins of the fathers are visited upon the heads of their children and the five protagonists show this. They are all born and raised in Newland, Tennessee, an industrial town of the South. Lisa Alther wittily describes their ascent to adulthood. As in *Kinflicks* she excels at describing the dumb jock's early sexual fumblings. Her main concerns are with the preoccupations of the Sixties and Seventies, Civil Rights, Black Consciousness and Power, Women's Liberation. The white South feels threatened by the North: 'First the civilian rights assholes, and now the union turds — it got plumb exhausting trying to maintain your freedom and democratic rights in the face of all this infiltration from up North'. Women saw themselves breaking free from traditional social roles. In New York one of the five, Emily, 'had begun to catch on: either you played the Great Ear, or you accepted the label of Festering Hole. One way or another, men were determined to fill your orifices'.

THE HEAD of an African state, Male Sebusia, has been deposed in *Beloved Latitudes.* Imprisoned in Kaga gaol by his Oxford-educated rival Hubert Hiwewe, he finds the only other occupant is Sebusia's former Minister of Commerce, the white Neville Tyldsley. Awaiting execution, Male dictates his autobiography to Tyldsley, now amanuensis, for the sake of history. Male has lost none of his charisma. He cuts himself shaving, and the blood-spotted towel is taken away by one of his two guards: 'It will hang in a church somewhere'.

The relationship between the two men is what matters and it produces an unexpected, poignant denouement. David Pownall manages skilfully the situations of an emergent African nation. A strong conviction remains that there is more than a hint of Amin and Major Bob Astles in Pownall's heroes. □

In the light of the French elections, **Robin Blackburn** looks at the troubled history of the French Left.

The Euro-socialists

ERIC HOBSBAWM once wrote — in connection with the May events of 1968 — that when it came to politics the French have 'star quality'. Since the days of the Popular Front the drama of French political life has included military defeat, collaboration, resistance, Liberation, general strikes, factory occupation movements, massive demonstrations and street clashes, coup d'etat. There have been three changes of regime and each regime has generated explosive conflicts. In addition to more conventional political doctrines, France has produced Gaullism, Poujadism, *gauchisme* and, as I shall argue, Euro-socialism. The last decade of French politics has been relatively uneventful but, nevertheless, the bourgeoisie has panicked at each election while the parties of the Left have staged their own melodrama of reconciliation and recrimination.

In a most informative and timely book R.W.Johnson seeks to bring this turbulent panorama within the focus of empirical political science. The book is divided into four parts. The first, after opening with 'Scenes from French Life 1979', presents an analysis of the fluctuating fortunes of the Left from 1945 to 1972; in Johnson's view the tripartite government of Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats (MRP) in the immediate postwar period has been the French Left's only substantial achievement and was succeeded by a sorry spectacle of decline and disintegration. The second part of the book explores those social trends favouring recovery by the Left in the Sixties and Seventies. There is valuable information on the waning significance of religion as a support for the Right, on the decline of Gaullism and on the acute tensions which result from extreme and blatant economic inequality and class polarisation. France is, he shows, the most unequal society in Europe, outranking even Spain after decades of Francoism. The third part of the book gives a blow by blow account of the defeat of the Union of the Left in 1978 and itemises the rich variety of gerrymandering practices that have discriminated against the Left in Assembly elections. The last section of the book examines the impact of the 1978 defeat on Communists and Socialists, concluding with a cautious assessment of the prospects for the 1981 Presidential election.

Johnson's scrutiny of electoral statistics brings out the intimate rivalry of Gaullism and the Left for urban, working-class support. He suggests that Gaullism has been in some respects closer to a Latin American style of populism than to traditional European conservatism in terms of the social support it has attracted. In the Seventies Mitterrand's re-born Socialist Party managed to make deep inroads on Gaullism's urban constituency.

While Johnson supplies valuable data on shifting political alignments there is little discussion of the political ideas and programmes, symbols and slogans which have defined the various detachments of Left and Right. The reader will not find here a guide to the economic thinking of Jacques Attali, nor mention of his proposals for the reorganisation of medicine, though Mitterrand's economic adviser is mentioned in connection with an anecdote concerning negotiations with the Communists. Likewise Johnson does not consider Serge-Christoff Kolm's influential reflections on the predicament of anti-capitalist governments elected within the framework of a bourgeois democracy, nor does he afford the reader much idea of the characteristic preoccupations of CERES, the Socialist left-wing, which has played a crucial role in helping to re-make French Socialism. Some account is given of the vivid polemics launched by Althusser and Elleinstein against the leadership of the PCF in 1978 but few clues are given to official Communist thinking on economic or social policy. Finally the proposals and watchwords of the smaller left-

The Long March of the French Left by R. W. JOHNSON *Macmillan* £20 & £8.95

Happy days: Leroy and Marchais of the PCF, Fabre of the Radicals, and Mitterrand.

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wing and radical groups are largely ignored; it is worth bearing in mind that the combined vote for the far left, socialist-feminist and ecological candidates amounted to over 9 per cent of the total in the first round of the Presidential election and, on this ground alone, they represent currents of thought which deserve more attention than they receive in Johnson's book. Leaving the battle of ideas and symbols out of politics results in a certain flatness.

Johnson has a good quotation from Trotsky on the dangers of 'anti-parliamentary cretinism' but I do not think Trotsky would have approved of an approach which only registers social earthquakes on the parliamentary seismograph. This is especially so since France has been wracked by such deep-seated social conflicts, making and unmaking the political superstructure. Johnson does not examine the processes whereby state systems in France have been constructed, challenged and defended, yet French politics has been at least as much about this as about the disputes over distribution familiar to anglo-saxon politics.

Johnson may have been misled here by his concern to rebut structuralist Marxism and to dispel revolutionary romanticism. In his introduction he declares that 'the serious study of electoral politics may have a most subversive effect on one's ability to describe the political process in terms of the broad brush strokes of class analysis'. But class analysis does not have to be conducted in broad brush strokes and there is much in the detail of Johnson's account which illustrates the way in which politics effects a peculiar fusion, or condensation, of class alliances and antagonisms. Thus throughout the book Johnson speaks of the *dynamique unitaire* to be observed within the left-wing electorate, often despite the fractious party chauvinism of the leaders. This *dynamique unitaire* would seem to be an effect of two different types of class politics: on the one hand, the aspiration to unity of the working-class movement, and, on the other, a reflex of opposition to the particular species of class state represented by the Fifth Republic.

THE NARRATIVE passages of the book are much richer than those devoted to more conventional exercises in political science —

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indeed occasionally they achieve the Balzacian intensity required for the truthful depiction of French politics. The opening vignette, 'Scenes from French Life', is a superb example of the sort of political writing so rarely encountered in the study of British politics. Johnson's account of the doings and sayings of Marcel Dassault, the armaments manufacturer, reminds one that, to adapt Sartre's famous objection to the description of Valery as a 'petit bourgeois' poet, Dassault is a French capitalist but not every French capitalist is Dassault. In the analytic sections of the book Johnson interprets the recent history of the French working class as one of gradual absorption and integration into a modernised capitalist system; in this perspective May '68 is an atavistic recurrence of an outmoded syndicalism.

Such a one-dimensional view, redolent of Anglo-Argentinian sociology, is belied in 'Scenes from French Life' by a vivid sketch of French steelworkers in 1979 occupying not only their plant but radio transmitters and police stations as well. Johnson's penchant for *realpolitik* yields real insights into bourgeois politics — and, unfortunately, into the machinations of the PCF and PS as well. But if we need Balzac to understand French politics, as Marx readily conceded, we also need the analytic concepts of the author of *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

Johnson is keen to dispute the view that Liberation or May '68 could have had outcomes radically more favourable to the Left. His method of argument here is not satisfactory, boiling down to the proposition that if armed insurrection, leading to the immediate suppression of capitalism, was not possible, then there was no alternative to the actual regimes of the Fourth and Fifth Republics. Yet in both 1945 and 1968 there would seem to have been massive support for a clean sweep of the old order, though in neither case was a consequent enthusiasm for socialism as widespread. Johnson points to De Gaulle's success in the June 1968 elections as evidence of the illusions of the Left in the fragility of the regime. Yet by the time of the elections the general strike had ended and the government had successfully reasserted Gaullist law and order. If the French trade unions had maintained the strike during the election period — as the British miners did in February 1974 — then the electoral verdict might also have been quite different.

Johnson regards Mitterrand's declaration against the Fifth Republic in 1968 as a major blunder. In the short-term, it is true, this flirtation with the extra-parliamentary movement did not enhance Mitterrand's standing as a responsible *homme d'état*, but in the longer run it may well have supplied him with a useful credential for re-organising the French Left. In fact Johnson does not take the measure of Mitterrand's achievement in largely inventing a political formula that has had a major impact on the countries of Mediterranean Europe: Euro-socialism. This re-vamped version of social democracy has been shot through with ambiguity from its inception. Its denunciations of the multi-nationals and its call for *auto-gestion* imply a definite anti-capitalism; but the slick and personalised propaganda of the Euro-socialist parties has all the socialist militancy and conviction of a toothpaste advertisement. The emblem of these parties was, I think, invented by the French: the traditional clenched fist — hold-

Meeting in 1968: since then, politicians of all parties have sought to appropriate that atmosphere of hope.

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ing out a red rose (to whom?).

Mitterrand was the first Socialist leader to experiment with this blend of old and new. Subsequently variants of the model have been adopted by Gonzalez in Spain, Soares in Portugal, Craxi in Italy and Papandreou in Greece. At the time of all the fuss about Euro-communism political commentators would have been well advised to take more account of its more dynamic precursor and rival. The Euro-socialist parties have caught the mood of an important section of the European working class, and middle class, but they are dominated by their leaders in a more personal fashion than was the case for the traditional workers' parties whose names and symbols they echo. So far as Mitterrand is concerned, as is well known, his adoption of the Socialist label was very belated. His appearance at the large rally in May '68 helped to redeem his earlier ministerial career under the Fourth Republic, and to associate him with the aspiration for renewal and change so powerfullly expressed by the May movement. Even Giscard, in the tragi-comic episode of 'new philosophers' invited to the Elysée Palace, was to seek to appropriate some of the aura of hope and promise of May '68.

I HAVE SUGGESTED that Johnson is weak on Socialist policy and ideology, and on the latter's borrowings from more radical movements. On the other hand his account of the sparring between the Socialist and Communist Parties is certainly useful. His account shows that Mitterrand's achievement was to make a clean break with the visceral anti-Communism of the old Socialist leaders. In fact a hallmark of Mitterrand's brand of Euro-socialism has been a certain reluctance to attack those to his left, whether inside or outside the Socialist party — in this he differs from Mario Soares or Bettino ('Benito') Craxi. This may be a matter of principle or temperament — or simply a consequence of the rules for Presidential contests under the Fifth Republic which, designed to favour unity on the Right, have also encouraged it on the Left.

Reading this book, and reflecting on Mitterrand's victory, it is difficult not to speculate on the possibility of Euro-socialism crossing the Channel. The British Labour movement certainly needs a far-reaching reappraisal of all its inherited methods and ideas, and there are signs that it has already begun the sort of re-birth which French social democracy embarked on in 1971.

The Labour Party is moving towards a more democratic structure while the National Executive has sponsored a variety of radical campaigns. Benn displays some of Mitterrand's openness to the Left and readiness to engage in radical re-thinking. Yet, with all its weaknesses, the renewal of French Socialism did involve a more systematic and sustained concern with alternative programmes than has so far appeared within the Labour Party. The CERES *(Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et d'Education Socialistes)* was, as its name implies, always more than a left-wing caucus, and was able to draw upon the research and debates of the trade unions and of other sections of the Left. At present Labour has no real equivalent to the CERES and its programmatic debates are correspondingly narrowed. □

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Kevin Crossley-Holland

Not easy

A Fine Anger: A Critical Introduction to the Work of Alan Garner by NEIL PHILIP *Collins* £5.95

Alan Garner's reputation is still largely founded on hearsay. It is difficult enough to find a children's librarian, let alone a child, who has tackled anything since his first three books, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen, The Moon of Gomrath* and *Elidor,* with real enjoyment. Entirely typical, I would judge, of the prevailing attitude are the words of a children's librarian I was talking to recently: 'Garner isn't actually *read* . . . He's beyond most children. My feeling is that his books are a bit rarified.'

Significantly, though, Garner's standing is extremely high among his fellow-writers and critics; and it is consistent with the respect always afforded him in the press that he should now be the subject of the first book to be devoted in its entirety to a living children's author. By its very existence, *A Fine Anger* is bound to increase Garner's hearsay reputation; but let me say at once that it is also a stimulating book — perceptive and knowledgeable and well-argued — that sets a new standard for critical writing about contemporary children's literature.

In his useful introduction, part biographical and part survey of Garner's work to date, Neil Philip firmly places Garner in Alderley Edge, the Cheshire village that is central to his work and that his family have inhabited for generations. And he points to the personal conflicts that Garner has struggled to resolve: between his birthright into a craftsman-family and his education at Manchester Grammar School and Oxford, between lower class and middle class, between the worlds of instinct and reason, between roots and alienation. This is good stuff, but when Philip sets Garner in a wider literary context, his allusion to 'the pale, enervated, self-regarding, directionless contemporary novel' is over-insistent, while his suggestion that Garner's writing 'has been less obviously weighty than the work of Hill or Hughes, but just as important' takes a good deal of swallowing.

Mr Philip considers each novel in turn and shows how Garner's innate gifts are an extremely powerful feeling for scape and the presence of the past, an ability to tell a story and a sense of language, while those that he has had to master (and has mastered) have been a sense of structure and the ability to characterise. The struggle for this mastery was a long one and came to a head in *Red Shift,* six years in the writing — a book still uncompromising in its interweaving of three separate stories but rewarding in its new warmth and basic premise 'that the hardest and most worthwhile thing is the establishing of a loving relationship between two people'.

Mr Philip is equally good on Garner's must substantial recent effort, *The Stone Book Quartet.* It is something of a paradox that many children (and adults) have found earlier Garner novels so difficult that they have been deterred from reading these four marvellous vignettes of Garner's own craftsman family that are specific, simple and profound, and eminently approachable. Above all, though, Mr Philip is at home in the mythological and folkloric thicket that underlies all Garner's earlier work; he illuminates a welter of allusion to Germanic and Celtic sources with enviable dexterity.

Writing as literary critic and not as sociologist, Mr Philip is surely right not to have worried too much about whether Garner's books are primarily for children or adults. He is informed and enthusiastic; one responds to him and trusts him. Almost. For is it really possible to accept that William Mayne is 'the other major British writer working exclusively in children's books', or that 'Fowles is the only other English novelist of Garner's generation of comparable stature'? These are substantial claims. With just a slight feeling of weariness brought on, I think, by Garner's own aloofness, I know I must go back again to the novels with both eyes open, and that is just what Mr Philip would want.

Phyllis Grosskurth on the writing of biography

Second-hand life

On the Edge of Paradise: A. C. Benson: Diarist by DAVID NEWSOME *John Murray* £17.50

Edwardian Excursions from the Diaries of A. C. Benson 1898-1904 edited by David Newsome *John Murray* £12.50

There are rare occasions when a biographer, about to embark on organising his book, is suddenly confronted with an unexpected mass of material, much, much more than he had ever dreamed of finding. Michael Holroyd has described the frustration and excitement of such an experience in his Preface to *Lytton Strachey.* His solution to the problem — for it really can be a most disturbing problem — was to unwind a narrative of a personality. As the narrative accumulated, we watched the growth of both subject and biographer, the latter developing his powers of organisation, perception and exposition. Holroyd gave us the sense of truly understanding his subject, and, since Strachey moved within a relatively circumscribed circle, his biographer was never distracted to the outer verges.

One can imagine the excitement and consternation experienced by David Newsome on the day when that specially constructed crate in which A. C. Benson's journals had been locked away for 50 years was finally broken open in the library of Magdalen College, Cambridge. True, the papers were confined to 180 journals whereas Holroyd has had thousands of unsorted papers to work through; but each biography presents problems of its own, and Newsome's were truly formidable. What could he *do* with nearly five million words? And furthermore Benson was a relatively minor figure. Had he been a Disraeli or a Gladstone, a massive research team could have been funded by a rich foundation. But in this situation the responsibility for the fate of the journals lay in the hands of one man.

In a sense the journals are a great repository of Victorian and Edwardian lore, and it must have been agonising to sacrifice any anecdotal scrap. Nevertheless, the exigencies of present publishing are such that a good deal had to be omitted. Even an enthusiastic biographer could not argue that Benson was a prestigious figure. His father had been Archbishop of Canterbury, and he himself was in turn a master at Eton, a fellow of Magdalene, and eventually its Master. He wrote a number of reflective books which received a certain mid-cult recognition in their day, his life was relatively uneventful, his personality low-keyed. Yet there existed those 180 journals spanning Benson's life from 1897 when he was 35 and a housemaster at Eton until his death as Master of Magdalene College in 1925. What was the perplexed Newsome to do?

He decided that he would write a substantial biography, blocking in the early unrecorded years, and culling from the journals a narrative sequence of Benson's life. It was a massive scholarly undertaking and it has been justly praised, but I find that it lacks vigour and I suspect that Newsome was grappling with a subject not congenial to his talents. For me Benson's *Godliness and Good Learning* and *The Parting of Friends* are sheer delight. (It is true that in *Godliness and Good Learning* he made a saint of Vaughan of Harrow, but it was written before John Addington Symonds's Memoirs revealed Vaughan's less saintly side.) Newsome is particularly convincing in explaining issues, beliefs and controversies among groups of people. This was the first time he had attempted a biography of an individual, and he relied almost exclusively on Benson's journals for information. Everything and everyone is depicted through Benson's eyes, and we learn little about how others saw Benson.

This is an ideal way of viewing the world if one is reading a diary or a journal, but here an obtrusive figure blocks the landscape. Newsome is constantly assuring us of Benson's gift of capturing idiosyncratic detail and the number of interesting people he met, and nudging us into a belief that Benson was a remarkable man.

I remained unconvinced by his portrait, and for great stretches I was massively bored. The outer life held little drama, the inner life was perhaps prudently concealed, though I suspect that Benson was emotionally undeveloped. The numerous vignettes of Edwardian social life were not sufficient, in my eyes, to justify a book of this length.

But how different are the extracts from the diaries for 1898-1904 which he has entitled *Edwardian Excursions.* Here is the voice of a man truly enjoying himself as he cycles through the Cotswolds, exulting over the beauty of the churches and the desultory chatter with his travelling companion. There is a wonderful account of a visit to the vice-regal Lodge in Dublin, infused with snobbery and scepticism, and a gorgeous description of a visit to Swinburne and Wats-Dunton at Putney. This is what we want: not massive scholarship but the evocation of a man who was far more alive than a second-hand description of him. May there be many more of these volumes. □

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THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

Mummy's boy

Hamlet by SHAKESPEARE *Stratford East*
Britannicus by RACINE *Lyric Studio, Hammersmith*

There is, I sometimes think, a danger of Shakespeare production and performance becoming specialist activities, the preserve of those and only those who have passed through the academy for budding Lears and Cleopatras they run at Stratford and in the Aldwych. No one but people holding diplomas stamped RSC, so to speak, can expect to progress beyond Fabian, Oswald and the Second Gravedigger. Yet I also sometimes think that there's only one serious reason for regretting this creeping annexation, and that is because it makes us dissatisfied with work we would probably have tolerated or even admired 10 or 15 years ago. Lindsay Anderson's *Hamlet* is by no means all bad, in spite of a Claudius whose idea of projecting feeling is to roar very loudly indeed and a First Gravedigger who buried several of his funnier lines on the second night. Something not unakin to intelligence has gone into the making of Bob Hornery's Polonius, a self-satisfied old fusspot, Tim Woodward's virile, sentient Laertes, and several other supporting parts. Yet again and again I caught myself thinking how much more meaning could be injected into that line, resonance into that moment, understanding and subtlety into that piece of characterisation. The present Stratford *Hamlet* is only so-so by RSC standards, but it makes Mr Anderson's effort sometimes look dangerously like a fifth-form production at a school better known for its football than for its lively arts.

It is, however, intermittently redeemed by its sweet (or sweet-and-sour) prince, Frank Grimes. He is, if you didn't know, a gifted young actor who has worked before with Mr Anderson in his own specialist area, the plays of David Storey. Most memorably, he was an aspiring poet, the weak, bruised victim of paternal oppression, in *The Farm* eight years ago. What qualified him for that part — his sensitivity and obvious vulnerability, his slight build, his somewhat thin, querulous voice, part-rasp, part-bleat — disqualifies him from being the all-purpose Shakespearian hero. When he says he's 'very proud, revengeful, ambitious', we feel he's indulging some embarrassing macho fantasy; and we're no more convinced by Fortinbras's quaint claim that he would have 'proved most royally, had he been put on'. Yet he is well enough equipped for other parts of Hamlet's personality, including some neglected of late. I don't think it's only happy memories of *The Farm* that make me see him as an ideal candidate for Dr Ernest Jones's Oedipal princeling, the one with the ultra-ambiguous feelings towards both dead father and errant mother.

Sometimes that's what he seems to be offering us. He doesn't react particularly strongly to his father's ghost itself, perhaps because, like us, he's unable to take entirely seriously a phantasm that stalks about shining a torch into its own face; but he gives a choking wail, or wailing choke, when it mentions his mother's remarriage, and the combination of abject affection and helpless violence with which he behaves to her in the closet-scene is no less purposeful and eloquent. Yet Mr Grimes, as is his right, goes further than this implies, trying and even managing to expand the mother's boy into a portrait of a young man whose simultaneous strength and weakness is to value the private more than the public, love more than his duty as revenger. Hence, his obvious fondness for Cora Kinnaird's Ophelia; hence, the impotent stampings of his foot as he shrilly whips himself up into something resembling a principled fury. Grimes is, as I say, far from the complete Hamlet. At times, for instance when he's skittishly standing on his head, playing hide-and-seek with Polonius, or leaping balletically into Guildencrantz's arms, he makes little sense of whatever it is he thinks he's attempting. But his performance as a whole is a creditable shot at making strengths of what might otherwise be limitations, the one glimmer of distinction in the surrounding murk.

Siobhan McKenna (Agrippina) and Jonathan Kent (Nero) in *Britannicus*

RACINE'S overridding obsession, the power of passion to subvert reason, decorum and all the Enlightenment's other professed virtues, is hardly without aptness in our own world of literary soirées, sociological treatises, and scrubbed white corridors leading from committee room A to laboratory B: so it has always surprised me that, with the possible exception of Aristophanes, in this country he should be the most overwhelmingly, outrageously neglected of all the great playwrights. Perhaps it is the notorious difficulty of anglicising that delicate, precise, awesomely simple verse without helplessly watching it become flat, insipid, even banal. Perhaps there's something about 17th-century dress innately more friendly to comedy of manners than tragedy, even stylised tragedy. We don't find it imaginatively easy to reconcile powdered perukes with big, bold feelings.

Christopher Fettes, back at the Lyric in hopes of resuscitating *Britannicus* as successfully as he recently did Marlowe's hardly more tractable *Faustus*, gets more help from the costume-department than the translation. The machine-guns, dark glasses and executive suits, assembled in a sort of brick prison with a noisy metallic garage-door for exit, suggest an impressionistic picture of Spain after next month's coup or, perhaps, Britain during the coming Thatcher terror; and the attendant danger, that the modern milieu will reduce the emotion too to serge and worsted, is on the whole avoided. The two main combatants, the apprentice-emperor Nero and his monster-mother Agrippina, are forcefully enough personated by Jonathan Kent and Siobhan McKenna: she, formidable and commanding behind the pinched, puffy, indisputably decaying clown-face that itself helps explain the desperation with which she seeks to restore her sway over Rome and her son; he clinking, stiffly twitching, snapping, throatily snarling as he tries and progressively fails to disentangle conscience, self-respect, desire for the beautiful Junie, jealousy of his stepbrother Britannicus, and some of the same Oedipal confusions we've already observed in this week's Hamlet.

To be candid, I can imagine richer, deeper performances and subtler, more resonant productions: but it's a brave start and, thanks also to the measured excellence of Alan MacNaughtan and Donald Pickering as (respectively) a virtuous and a shoddy-smooth lackey, a pretty accomplished one. Now what about *Andromaque* and *Berenice, Athalie* and, of course, *Phèdre* itself? Mr Fettes's initiative shouldn't be permitted to lapse.

TELEVISION

William Boyd

Symbolism and the Ripper

CLOSE-UP of a pool table. *Click!* News reporter Jeremy Thompson sends the pool-balls ricocheting to and fro. 'This,' Thompson solemnly informs us, 'was Peter Sutcliffe's favourite game', thereby getting BBC-1's follow-up to the Yorkshire Ripper verdict off to a depressingly poor start. The *Nationwide* syndrome, as this ailment might be termed, consists of a compulsive need to provide a visual analogue for any fact, no matter how straightforward and uncomplicated that fact happens to be. The Ripper's killings were random, yes? When you cannon one pool-ball into a pile of others they kind of like form a sort of, um, random pattern effect, don't they? The fact that for the rest of the programme Thompson then delivered his commentary while improbably clutching a billiard cue in one hand didn't

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seem to cross anyone's mind as idiotic. And neither did the dubious sensationalism of illustrating Sutcliffe's drives through red-light districts by shooting street scenes through a refracting prismatic lens to the accompaniment of yowling mechanical music and thumping heartbeats. Ah, point-of-view of a paranoid schizophrenic. These were very bad ideas, and were capably exposed as such by ITN's coverage of the case on the same night, which in less time produced twice as much information without recourse to inept special effects.

The fake elaboration of news reporting was further spotlit in *Images of War* (BBC-2) which looked at the work of the Army film unit and in particular the making of the film *Desert Victory* in 1942. An effervescent Roy Boulting, tricked-out in early-Beatle fringe, told of the combination of luck, amateurism and skill that produced this first newsreel of any consequence. The gaff was blown by a laconic cameraman when he revealed that all those shots of grim-faced tommies marching through clouds of smoke and sand with bayonets fixed had been filmed at the infantry base depot. It seemed, somehow, that we were being invited to applaud this as a further example of British ingenuity, but the cameraman's blunt candour was more explicit than this. They were, he confessed, attempting to fix up 'an ideal situation from a picture point of view', and, more sinisterly, 'trying to recreate war as we were all taught in history books'.

Elsewhere, in one of the dives on 42nd Street, Barry Norman interviewed the sinisterly affable Al Goldstein, publisher of *Screw,* to the background of a listlessly gyrating stripper called Tiffany Day. Tiffany's act, Al opined, had real class, and he amiably went on, in the astonishingly articulate way every American on TV seems naturally to possess, to defend his shameless purveying of porn. This was one segment of *Barry Norman on Broadway* (BBC-1), an agreeable tour along the Great White Way and its environs. Norman's wit seems more and more striven for these days — with a consequent increase in the number of really dud jokes — but the many competing egos and 'characters' he encountered were ideal material for him to work on and, with a little encouragement, seemed happy to condemn themselves out of their own mouths without any extra help required.

OTHERWISE, most of the week's enjoyment came from difficult things being done well. This was certainly true of *People from the Forest* (BBC-2) an account of Andrei Sakharov's fall or rise — depending on which side of the iron curtain you stand — from atomic physicist to famous dissident. The nature of Sakharov's change of heart was a private, intellectual one, most inconducive to dramatisation, but writer Stephen Davis and director Mick Jackson are to be commended for coming up with a clever and — despite a few *longueurs* — an intriguing film. Pace and variety were achieved through a generous amalgam of method and technique, ranging from straight TV drama to documentary voice overs, and including film clips (good old *Battleship Potemkin)* newsreels and regular symbolic shots of rats in mazes (bit overdone these days?), mysteriously opening doors and radiation-bombarded foetuses. The resulting welter of juxtaposed images and cross references was only initially confusing, and as they gradually became clearer and significances evolved so too did some conception of the thought processes and reassesments Sakharov must have experienced as he made the weary and nerve-wracking transformation from hero of socialist labour to Nobel peace prize winner. A fine performance from John Shrapnel helped considerably, as did the fact that the entire play was filmed which, on TV, works wonders for verisimilitude.

At one point Sakharov laid into the 'narcotic of mass-culture'. Had he been stricken with *Nationwide* syndrome he might well have illustrated this concept with a clip from *The World Professional Latin American Dance Championships* (BBC-1). Here the competitors' faces are fixed in a doped-up manic smile as they wheel and sidle through their rumbas and cha-chas in their curious clenched-buttocked, stiff-spined way. From time to time they mouth 'ooh', 'ah' and 'hey!' to signify the odd impromptu thrill, but it's simply a gesture to the past when dancing was fun. Now their minds are locked in furious concentration as only fanatical precision drilling can lift the trophy these days, the competition is so intense. The women wear elaborate cut away swimming costumes, and the men sport elasticated jump suits with enormous flares. Compulsive viewing. The dedicated pursuit of excellence has its fascination no matter how minor the art form.

No mass-culture on the *South Bank Show* (LWT) which devoted itself to the third act of Alban Berg's opera *Lulu.* Hardly easy listening , and one would have thought that the prospect of an hour of atonal modernism would have had most viewers hurriedly switching over to the third round of the Sun Alliance golf championships. But Tony Cash's film was a model of how to present recondite material: a mix of unpatronising expert commentary and key scenes from the opera, featuring the formidable Karan Armstrong — an ideal surname — as a beefily alluring Lulu. Her act had class; even Al Goldstein might have agreed. □

FILMS

John Coleman

Just fancy

The Fan (X) *Plaza*

Flailing around for a precedent, one comes up with what Roger Vadim made out of Choderlos de Iaclos' eighteenth-century classic, *Les Liaisons dangereuses,* back in 1959: a travesty. Now it could hardly be claimed that Bob Randall's four-year-old thriller, *The Fan, is a literary masterpiece* but it does contrive to be both bitchily funny and mounting with menace at the same time, so that you relinquish it — after the fatal last twist — with a kind of guilty satisfaction alleviated by admiration for its cool, withheld cunning. I read it at a swoop when it appeared in paperback and could now rather wish that I hadn't. Because the point of it depends on its artful deployment of that outmoded form, the epistolary novel, which lends itself as no other to all manner of ironies, parallel actions and deceptions, even to the ultimate mask of anonymity.

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As many entries as you wish for £1, but the last word of the first line must be LEICESTER
Send cheque or P.O., with name, address & Tel. No. to:
Mary Carter, Room 208, Municipal Buildings, Charles St., Leicester LE1 1FB. Tel: 0533 56430/549922 ext. 7395.
By Sat 6 June.

OVAL HOUSE
01-582 7680
JUNE
3-7. 7.30 Jail Warehouse present Laura Gilbert in 'THREES' by Jeff Nuttall. & 9.30 *Hardware (Women's Cabaret).*
10-14. 7.30 TNT in a double bill, '1945' & DON'T LOOK BACK!
17 & 18. 7.30 ONE OFF — *a dance collage with Belinda Neave.*
17-20. 9 p.m. *Evening with Mitzi Wildebeest.*
20. 7.30 'You might as well Live' — *Reading of a new play by Jill Posener.*
54 Kennington Oval SE11.

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Underlying the brittle letters and scrappy notes are some six months in the life of a movie star, currently pushing 50 and acting on Broadway. This Sally Ross has a still cherished ex-husband Jake and wisecracking secretary with a heart of gold, Belle, who screens out most of her fan mail. Which is where the young maniac Douglas Breen crops up with increasing frequency and frenzy. His arch and admiring missives modulate through a passion imagined to be mutual into bitterness and killing threats. Along the way, he has caught up with Belle, seen as the wilful suppressor of his outpourings, and viciously slashed her face in the subway. Much worse is to follow. The police are amiable but unavailing.

It probably seemed like a good idea at the time to translate this creepy stuff into a movie and Robert Stigwood's production of *The Fan,* with a screenplay by Priscilla Chapman and John Hartwell, is not devoid of notions, particularly in the casting. James Garner can make little of smiley Jake because there is little to be made, but Lauren Bacall is in high steely form as Sally the Star, marvellously rolling back the years, then showing every cruel month of them, as occasion demands, and Maureen Stapleton could do bantering Belle with the director's hands tied behind his back (which one sometimes feels they were). Hector Elizondo is also fine as a friendly cop. But what about that director, Edward Bianchi? That the script is shorter on humour and longer on murders and maimings than its source, and further insists on importing some song-and-dance divertissements, is unlikely to be his doing, after all. And it was always going to be ticklish putting a plausible body and face on the fantasising Fan, so beastly effective on the page, a phrase-making clown at first, at least a scatological frightener. Here the actor, Michael Biehn, a pervasive presence, is flat in recurrent voice-over, smugly wooden in his appearance, a stabber by numbers.

And there is something inexcusably heavy about the steady insistence on big close-ups. From the credits on, the eye is positively rammed into old Douglas's typewriter, huge fingers on mammoth keys, the carriage bulkily whizzing towards us; or encouraged to dwell on a copse of sharpened pencils, or a gargantuan bread-knife, or the Fan's screen-filling lips. It is as if the Fan must be fancied up at all costs. At the other extreme, the camera goes high overhead outdoors, to show him small and solitary amid park seats. The fellow may be mad, but such visual fragmentations and diminutions call attention to themselves, not his states of mindlessness. And the result of all this pictorial over-emphasis, a couple of quick-cut shocks apart, is inevitably self-defeating. Nothing builds, everything just jerks along. It must be the least thrilling thriller in ages.

Weekend competition

No 2670 **Set by P.W.R. Foot**

Cleo Laine and Princess Michael have recently had roses named after them. Give an appropriate description — details of cultivation, scent etc. — of any two imaginary flowers or plants (weeds not excluded) named after any current famous persons. Limit 150 words, by 12 June.

No 2667 **Set by F. R. Spofforth**

Verses addressed to the more exotic-sounding inhabitants of London Zoo.

Report **By Fat Jeff**

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; but Ms de Meaner (beside whom the Severe Macaw looks like a milksop) has jetted off to her Scottish estates for a few weeks of 'spiritual nourishment', taking with her the collected works of Althusser. As you can imagine, the boss's departure was accompanied by scenes of unconfined revelry in the Complex — so much so, indeed, that I have had to judge this comp by *feel,* as the words wouldn't stand still for long enough for me to make them out. It *seems* a pretty decent effort, so let's give six quid to Fagg and allow four for every other entry printed.

The frog from Buenos Aires who clacks
So vibrantly 'Ko-ax! Ko-ax!'
(For Argentinian frogs all speak
In accents of pure Attic Greek)
Is not, as listeners might suppose,
In frantic love, but in the throes
Of busting one of Reason's blocks:
The ontologic paradox
That things must have a Primal Cause,
Which must itself, by Logic's laws,
Be likewise caused — that dire progression
That's labelled Infinite Recession.
So when you hear him ululate
Through tropic nights, do not berate
The hapless chap: be patient, kind —
He's got a lot upon his mind.

MARTIN FAGG

If you think that the cobra's a difficult pet,
My Grey Go-Away Bird's more difficult yet.
I remember inviting the vicar for tea —
The saturnine bird gave a squawk of 'Oo's 'e?'
Then farted a good deal of poisonous gas
And snarled at the petrified cleric: 'Haul ass!'
If I bring home a girl I especially like
This avian monster will cry: 'On yer bike!'
When she humbly inquires if he knows 'Georgie Porgie'
The malevolent bastard will spew forth an orgy
Of insults, and pointedly shit on the floor . . .
Tell me, what is a Go-Away Bird really *for?*

PETER NORMAN

I am the Perfect Lorikeet;
Observe my colouration.
I strut about the parrot house
Inviting admiration.

NICHOLAS MURRAY

Meeting a long-nosed Potoroo
Escaping from the London Zoo,
There's only one thing you can do:
Say courteously, but firmly, 'Shoo!'

When a Perfect Lorikeet
With another PL's smitten,
All too often they produce
A Pluperfect Lorikitten.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

What in heaven can one do
With a Long-nosed Potoroo?
Treat it gently, if you're wise;
Praise the beauty of its eyes.
Then the creature, I suppose,
Worries less about its nose.

PETER VEALE

The Funereal Cockatoo
Can imitate a sob or two,
Accompanied by stifled sniffs

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Half smothered into hankerchiffs.
It can be (at the usual fees)
Let out for solemn obsequies.

JOYCE JOHNSON

King John was not a bad man
But he had his wicked ways:
He took away the passports
Of the Sooty Mangabeys.

ANDREW BEAZLEY

I bought myself a Blotched Genet,
Hoping the brute would write a play,
But all it could produce, in fact,
Was one quite brief and bestial act.

GERARD BENSON

The Vietnamese Pot-Bellied Pig
Has a habit that's most infra-dig:
It eats its repast
Much faster than fast,
And that's why its belly's so big.

F. PITT-KETHLEY

It looks very much easier to throttle
A Cassowary with one wattle
Than to strangle
One from whose neck two or three dangle.

BILL GREENWELL

The Cotton-Headed Tamarin
Is low on sense but high on sin;
Wickeder you rarely get,
Even with a marmoset.
Happily this little beast
Is not dangerous in the least:
Whatever nasty thing it thinks
Soon to oblivion safely sinks.
Indeed, zoologists have seen
This dunce do good it does not mean.

T. GRIFFITHS

The Scintillating Copper Pheasant
Is so vain it's quite unpleasant,
Ignoring every other bird
And strutting by without a word.
Yet really it is to be pitied
For when it's plucked and drawn and spitted
(Alas! From lustrous to unlucky!)
It may end up as Fried Kentucky.

JIMMIE PEARSE

A Fat-Tailed Dwarf Lemur in bed
With the father of hangovers said
'My bloody great rudder
Makes most females shudder,
And now I've acquired a fat head!'

GERRY HAMILL

One feels the Perfect Lorikeet
Must rank among the bird *élite,*
And turn its nose up should one drop,
Inside its cage, a lollipop.

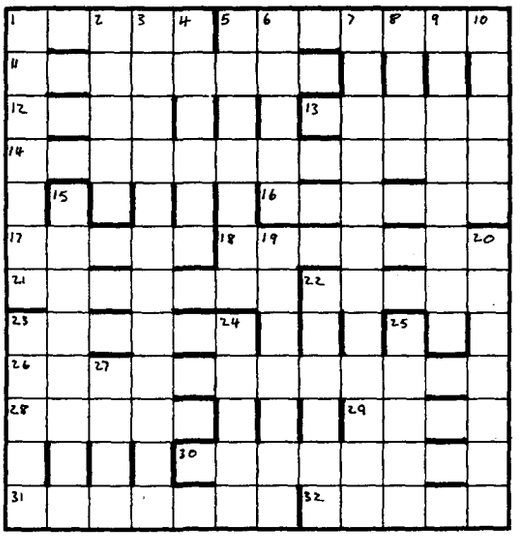
W.F. OWTRAM

Perfect Lorikeet and Severe Macaw,
We humbly stand your cage before;
Imperfect human creatures we —
That's why we locked you up, you see.

O. BANFIELD

Salamanca: 42 'Straight'

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 42, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 9 June.



Every answer is in Chambers 1977 except the word (?) at 15.

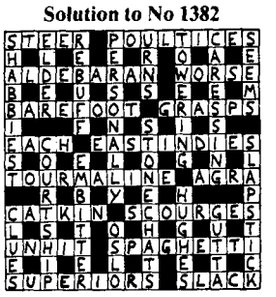
ACROSS

1 Carefree Bombadil not mad about this one? (5)
5 Punk taking ease mostly — idle shirker (7)
11 E.g. Carter, a chap with a fine heart (8)
12 Shed found in odd places in Orkneys perhaps (4)
13 The window-decorator's failure? (5)
14 *White* blossom for real gown made to cover sweetheart? (12)
16 It's natural to order at nine when one's dined at the tavern? (6)
17 So! You see these at head of saints (5)
18 Mineral in bent bar-shape mostly round, eh? (7)
21 Arch sceptic raises this? (7)
22 Remaining different (5)
23 Usquebaugh possibly giving the sulks to Mac (6)
26 Make rings in 'crop' with one? (12)
28 A hole made in the last year's income? (5)
29 Malignant sprite to vex once and make one cross for nothing (4)
30 Temper producing one twitch in partner (8)
31 Holmes' Inspector had no head for the platform (7)
32 Observe Hitler's Guard coming in back by these? (5)

DOWN

1 Mystery players e.g. captured by the Krauts (7)
2 Scots Ananias to glance sideways about one (5)
3 With horses he'll break stubborn core (12)
4 A glow is not weak perhaps, coming from this (6)
5 Musical piece which, we hear, goes round and round (7)
6 Nutrition and amenities for inmates initially this provides (5)
7 *Domestic ties*? (12)
8 Recognise last work immediately (4)
9 "May Salamanca prosper!" (If *he* said this it would have ominous overtones!) (8)
10 Guy used something of this type treasonably (5)
15 Could be met with say, re what's in arboretum (8)
19 This disciple i.e. new to order (7)
20 Tisiphone & Co with no fourth to reign cruelly indeed (7)
22 Nasty ghoul, not horrific, that's no longer threatening (6)
23 At bottoms of cliffs etc. your loose rubble (5)
24 Faint-hearted, lifting cotton mostly (5)
25 In extremes of temperatures valley of the Mesozoic Age (5)
27 Tins to be distributed — when? (4)

Solution to No 1382



Prizewinners to No 1382

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Miss E. L. McCartney (Edinburgh)
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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE Royal Shakespeare Company 836 6404. Recorded booking info. 836 5332 cc379 6233. **Knight of the Burning Pestle** by Beaumont June 1, 2. 'A laugh a minute' S. Times. **Nicholas Nickeby** Few day seats & returns available. RSC also at The Warehouse (836 6808) in **The Accrington Pals** by Peter Whelan. **Outskirts** by Hanif Kureishi. **Naked Robots** by Jonathan Gems. RSC also at Piccadilly in Willy Russell's hilarious **Educating Rita**.

NATIONAL THEATRE 928 2252 Olivier (open stage) 'Man & Superman', 'Amadeus'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'Measure for Measure'. 'The Elephant Man'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'Sergeant Musgrave's Dance', 'Don Juan'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

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SCREEN ON THE GREEN, 226 3520. 'Melvin and Howard' (AA) Progs: 3.50, 5.40, 7.30, 9.30.

Meetings

ADLERIAN SOCIETY: VIVIENNE WILMOT, Anthropologist, Chairman of Adlerian Society of Great Britain, will speak on 'The integration of African Families' followed by discussion. 7.30 p.m. Tuesday 2 June. Refreshments from 7.15. Community Rooms, 36 Millman St. WC1. Visitors welcome 50p (students 25p).

ASTROLOGY? A sceptical view. Jeremy Cherfas 7 p.m. Thursday 4 June. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Adm. free. Organised by National Secular Society.

CAMDEN COUNCIL for International Cooperation *'In Defence of Free Trade Unions'*: Graham Hancock (Amnesty International), Oliver MacDonald (East Europe Solidarity Cmpn) 7 p.m. Tue. 2 June, Friends House, Euston Road, NW1.

EMOTIONAL FULFILMENT. Day Workshop Sunday 31 May. Finchley N12. Tel. 446 1241 details.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries 06285 26464.

1967 ABORTION ACT does not apply to Northern Ireland and abortion is illegal in Northern Ireland and the Republic. Irish women, from Northern Ireland and the Republic, campaigning for a woman's right to choose will talk as ALRA's guests at 2 p.m. Saturday 6 June at Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1. Every one welcome.

TENTH CHORLEY LECTURE. Professor André Tunc, of the University of Paris, on 'British Company Law; the view of a French lawyer.' Wed. 10 June 5.30 p.m. Shaw Library, LSE, Houghton St, London WC2.

THE BUDDHIST PATH. Seminar on Zen, Tibetan and Theravada Schools. Speakers: Anne Bancroft, Sogyal Rinpoche, Dr Saddhatissa. £2. 10-6 Saturday 6 June at the Theosophical Society, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3HJ. Tel: 01-935 9261.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme. Sun 31 May 8 p.m. Open Q/A Meeting. 'Psychic Powers and Hazards'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT: A public discussion between Lord Soper and Colonel Alford, Deputy Director, International Institute of Strategic Studies on Wednesday 3 June 8 p.m. (free). Westminster Conference Centre, Victoria Street, SW1.

SHIRLEY WILLIAMS
speaking on
SOCIAL DEMOCRACY
7.30 p.m., Wednesday, 3 June
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Holidays / Travel

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